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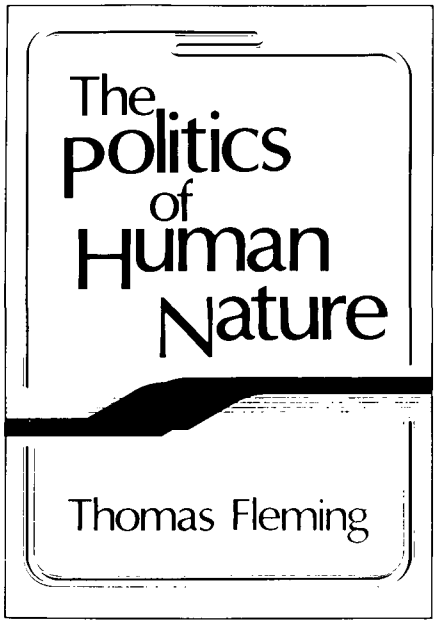

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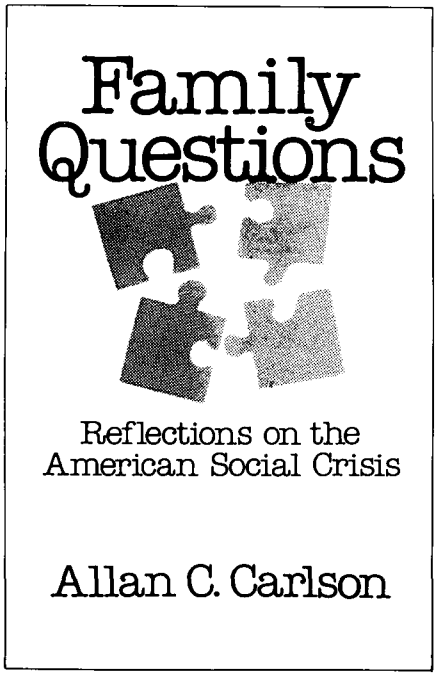

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
Vol. 13, No. 11 November 1989

On 'Enemies of Society'

Arthur Eckstein has written a generous review of Peter Collier's and my book *Destructive Generation* (August 1989). In responding to the one substantive criticism he makes, it is my intention only to clarify our view of what is undoubtedly an interesting question: what is the nature of the post-Khrushchev (and now post-Gorbachev) left? Eckstein chides us for not identifying our target specifically as the *hard* left. He invokes such nontotalitarians as Irving Howe and Michael Harrington as evidence that "'the left' is in reality a pretty big place."

Well, yes and no. If we are speaking of theories and manifestos, the left can indeed be spacious: proclamations in behalf of democratic principles are routinely to be found alongside paeans to totalitarian agendas and systems. But in terms of real political choices the radical terrain tends to be far more constricted.

During the last decade, for example, it has not been possible to oppose the latest Marxist "experiment" in Nicaragua and retain one's left-wing credentials. Robert Leiken and Ronald Radosh, two second-thoughters like ourselves, provide a case in point. Both regarded themselves as social democrats but were subjected to vicious denunciation by the left—as "spokesmen for Reagan" and "CIA agents"—when they condemned the Sandinistas. In effect, their opposition to totalitarians in Nicaragua caused them to be expelled from the ranks. Radosh was banned from writing about Nicaragua in the pages of *Dissent* by Irving Howe, personally. (Radosh still regards himself as a social democrat and is still an editor of *Dissent*, though effectively silenced. His fellow editors, with Howe's backing, have pressured him to resign.)

Or consider Eckstein's other example, the late Michael Harrington. In the 60's, Harrington was an outspoken and principled critic of the New Left's alliances with Communists and other totalitarians. But because of his commitment to the anti-totalitarian principle, he was consigned to political irrelevance during the era of the great Movement upheavals. Following those upheavals, Harrington spent the last years of his life apologizing for the principled stand he took in the 60's, while embracing the same political alliances (with Communists and Third World totalitarians) he had once so roundly condemned. Harrington's organization—the Democratic Socialists of America—featured Sandinista foreign minister Miguel D'Escoto as a speaker at its last convention, while Harrington's cochair Barbara Ehrenreich wrote the following comment in the November 1988 issue of *Mother Jones*:

"But the only thing that really bothers me [about the 1988 presidential elections in the US] is the millions of people whose very lives may depend on the outcome of the elections—but who aren't allowed to vote at all. I'm thinking, of course, of the three million Nicaraguans, and the endangered residents of various U.S. enemy and client states scattered throughout the world. So no matter how cretinous the candidates are, no matter how insulting the campaign, I grit my teeth and vote the way the Nicaraguans, etc., would if they were given a say."

In short: domestically, America is a poor excuse for a democracy and there is no point in leftists taking its politics seriously; abroad, America is a world oppressor; the task of the left, therefore, is to provide a solidarity fifth column for America's totalitarian enemies and other "victims" of American imperialism. This is an 80's version of the same old 60's claptrap. Not a very big place at all.

—*David Horowitz*
Los Angeles, CA

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On 'Rock and Roll Never Forgets'

Never did I think the day would arrive when I would feel compelled to come to the defense of the music of Irving Berlin and Cole Porter. I felt pricked by the darts flung at their genius by Thomas Fleming (Perspective, August 1989).

I suppose that first I should cast Berlin and Porter in their rightful roles as two of the greatest composers of popular music in the first half of the 20th century. They are also among the very few of their genre who, like the rock and roll entertainers, wrote both words and music. Cole Porter's "Let's Do It," which Mr. Fleming finds to be "a theme song for sophisticated hypocrisy," is a perfect example of his outstanding talent for creating original rhymes and turns of phrase. The latter half of this century, as Mr. Fleming points out, has been dominated by the product of the rock and rollers.

I have no argument with Mr. Fleming's determination that rock and roll started out as a reaction against the liberal status quo, turned into a vehicle for left-wing protest and so continues today. Mr. Fleming deplores the fact that business and commercialization have corrupted the spontaneous rock and roll of the 1950's. I would be remiss if I left unmentioned the effect of rock and roll on the music business. Compared to 40 years ago, sheet music sales have become insignificant, and many piano and organ manufacturers have closed down. Where are the old music stores of which every town of 15,000 had at least one? Gone the way of the Barton chocolate shops.

I recently watched a video of Rod Stewart singing a rock and roll number called "She Drives Me Crazy." The melody consists of one bar of three notes played over and over again. No, Mr. Fleming, if it is singable music you are claiming for rock and roll, we are reduced to discussing the emperor's new clothes.

Now for the lyrics. Several of our legislators' ladies in Washington have had some success recently in forcing the recording studios to affix warning labels on those numbers with the raunchiest words and descriptive phrases. Mr. Fleming, who considers Cole Porter and his colleagues hypocritical for writing of love instead of the sex act, states that these new lyrics hark back to the Anglo-Celtic roots of American music, to the violence and authenticity of the old Anglo-Celtic Border ballads, to a confrontation of real life as it is led by passionate men and women. This may or may not be true, but I have read cleverer rhymes and descriptions on the walls of men's toilets both here and in the British Isles.

As a gratuitous aside, Mr. Fleming describes a well-known disc jockey as "arguably the worst influence on American popular taste since Irving Berlin." For my own part, I am unimpressed by the huge and continuing popularity of rock and roll. Unlike Mr. Fleming, though, I find my explanation in H.L. Mencken, whose life extended into the rock and roll era and who also wrote, "No one ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American people."

—Charles A. Strange
Milford, CT

Mr. Fleming Replies:

Mr. Strange is only being naive in his refusal to understand what Cole Porter meant by "do it." Noel Coward, who used to perform the song in a particularly salacious manner, knew better. The point of comparison was not technical but moral, and the bisexual and dissolute Mr. Porter does not stand comparison with a family man (however wild he was when younger) like John Mellencamp. Porter was, and I do not deny it, a clever songwriter, and the big band era did produce more than a few memorable arrangers and performers whose technical standards were well above those of rock and roll. But comparing "Crazy About Her" (the Rod Stewart song Mr. Strange has confused with the Fine Young Cannibals' "She Drives Me Crazy") with Kern and Porter is as ridiculous as calling Irving Berlin a genius.

Nonetheless, the lyric writing of the best popular composers of the past 20 years is unarguably better than most of the lyrics of the previous 20 years. (I will grant you that the farther back one goes, the tougher the competition. The team of Jerry Kern and P.G. "Plum" Wodehouse could occasionally rival Gilbert and Sullivan.) The texts of Lou Reed's "Sweet Jane," Bob Dylan's "Tangled Up in Blue," and Hank Williams, Jr.'s "I Got Rights" are decidedly literary in quality and explore areas of experience that were untouched by even the best tunesmiths of the 40's.

Finally, there is the question of technical proficiency in music and verse. What would Mr. Strange make of Leonard Bernstein's argument that rock music employs a broader variety of modes than has been available for some time, citing "Norwegian Wood" and "Paint It Black" among many examples. There is also the metrical versatility displayed even by so poor a composer as Elton John in "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues," which a classical metrician would describe as an ionic/choriambic lyric in the vein of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

For the most part, rock music *is* disgusting and incompetent filth. But the same generalization is true of the television, film, novels, and verse of the 1980's. On the other hand, there are also, working here and there, a few good poets, novelists, filmmakers, television producers, and even rock musicians. What I find difficult to understand, as an aging member of the Baby Boom Generation, is the holier-than-thou posture sometimes assumed by the generation that elected Franklin Roosevelt, gave a large part of the world away to the Communists, and presided over the worst political-military-ethical disaster in our nation's history, the Vietnam War. Mine is not a generation I should choose to brag about, but why does the potter curse the clay?

◆

Two corrections in Jack Miles's September piece "The Economics and Politics of Book Reviewing" that did not reach us until after press time: the separate circulation of The New York Times Book Review *is 75,000, not 100,000 as reported, and contrary to Mr. Miles's argument* The New York Times *did in fact review Pete Dexter's novel* Paris Trout *before—not after—it received the National Book Award in 1988.*

◆

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THE PHENOMENON of popular movements of protest succeeding and then being swallowed up by the Establishment is not a new story in American history, but the fate of "conservatism" in the last decade or so gives a remarkable case study. Not long ago, after ages of liberal dominance, conservatism seemed to be in the ascendancy both intellectually and at the grassroots level. Somewhere between the election of 1980 and now, a vast popular demand for reform was captured and emasculated by party politicians and literary spoilsmen, so that conservatism has ended up as nothing more than a vague rhetorical label for a very slightly modified form of Liberal Establishment.

These reflections are ignited by the sad fate of two erstwhile fighting conservatives, Jack Kemp and William Bennett. Both these gentlemen were youthful (as national politicians go), energetic, and articulate. Both have ended up in petty administrative posts in a "moderate" Republican administration — posts from which they cannot possibly draw any credit. In fact, I will bet a bound volume of, say, the last good year of *National Review* (1968) that they are politically dead.

That Kemp accepted the post of Secretary of HUD and Bennett that of "Drug Czar" speaks well for their honorable desire for public service. It speaks poorly indeed for their political judgment. In fact, only a very slight and healthy bit of paranoia would suggest that they have been deliberately tricked into corners where they could be finished off as rivals and critics of Bush. Can one detect the quick and dirty hands of Mr. Atwater and Mr. Baker at the bottom of this smooth and barely noticeable coup?

Maybe so or maybe not. We won't know for a long time, maybe never. The media don't notice intraparty dirty tricks (quite as common as the interparty ones) because they would take too much work to ferret out, and they are really only interested in dirty tricks against liberals. If neither Kemp nor Bennett can possibly emerge from the present posts except as weaker public figures than they were, then *cui bono*? The party operatives have disarmed youthful, energetic, articulate, and potentially troublesome figures, and we are left with the Vice-President, who is a handpicked man and who is, well, youthful. Not long ago there were half a dozen solid aspirants to the leadership of "conservatism" in the Republican Party. Now there are no conservatives at all, just Republicans.

It is a shame to see useful men destroyed by their own virtues. Both of them have accepted the major premises of the Liberal Establishment, which they have attacked only on marginal and instrumental questions. Both have been fairly popular with the media, which is a certain sign that they are not too serious a threat to the Establishment. But they had the virtue of standing for *something*.

Mr. Kemp seems an honorable man, no small accomplishment for someone who was a denizen of the House of Representatives for so long. His arm-waving invocations of 19th-century egalitarian mythology disgust conservatives, but they energized the Republican electorate, or at least three percent of them. (When a Kemp-for-President rally was held in my very conservative area, no one showed up except some fraternity boys looking for free beer, and two very rustic libertarians from the Pee Dee Swamp.)

The appropriate thing for Mr. Kemp to do was to go back to New York (or even his native Southern California, where earnest superficiality would be an asset) and run for senator or governor. He would have lost but gained credit. There must be some strange defect in judgment in a free marketeer who takes on a government boondoggle in the hopes of transforming it by the spirit of enterprise. (His assumption seems to be that the spirit of free enterprise can be created by government subsidy.) Surely every public figure in Washington on Kemp's level knew the HUD scandals had to break soon. Completely guiltless of wrongdoing, his name will hereafter be indelibly associated with a scandal from which he cannot possibly gain any credit, especially after his naive and premature defense of his predecessor.

(Since HUD exists totally and entirely for the purpose of bribing contractors, white collar "experts," local politicians, and the more clever and less scrupulous members of minority groups, how are we to distinguish the illegal graft that is supposed to have taken place from the legal graft that goes on as a matter of course?)

Mr. Bennett, for all his eloquence and wit, has fallen into the same trap. Does he or anyone really believe that the drug-taking portion of the American public can be educated into giving up their hobby with exhortations to "democratic values"? There are only two ways that drug-taking will be stopped: effective local enforcement against users, with swift, long, and certain prison terms; or the return of a very muscular form of Christianity to the hells of the streets. Neither of these things is going to happen. There is no way Mr. Bennett can win his war, and

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he will go down as a failure who met none of his promises.

In a sense both of these gentlemen deserve their fate, but it would have been much better if they had been overcome by superior ideas rather than by political operatives utterly devoid of idea and principle.

—*Clyde Wilson*

WITCHES AND SATANISTS tax-exempt? When we raised the issue in the September 1988 *Chronicles*, several members of the nation's clerical lobby scoffed. But in Rhode Island, the home of Roger Williams and other champions of religious freedom without responsibility, a witches' coven known as Our Lady of the Roses Wiccan Church has apparently met the guidelines that determine a legitimate church group.

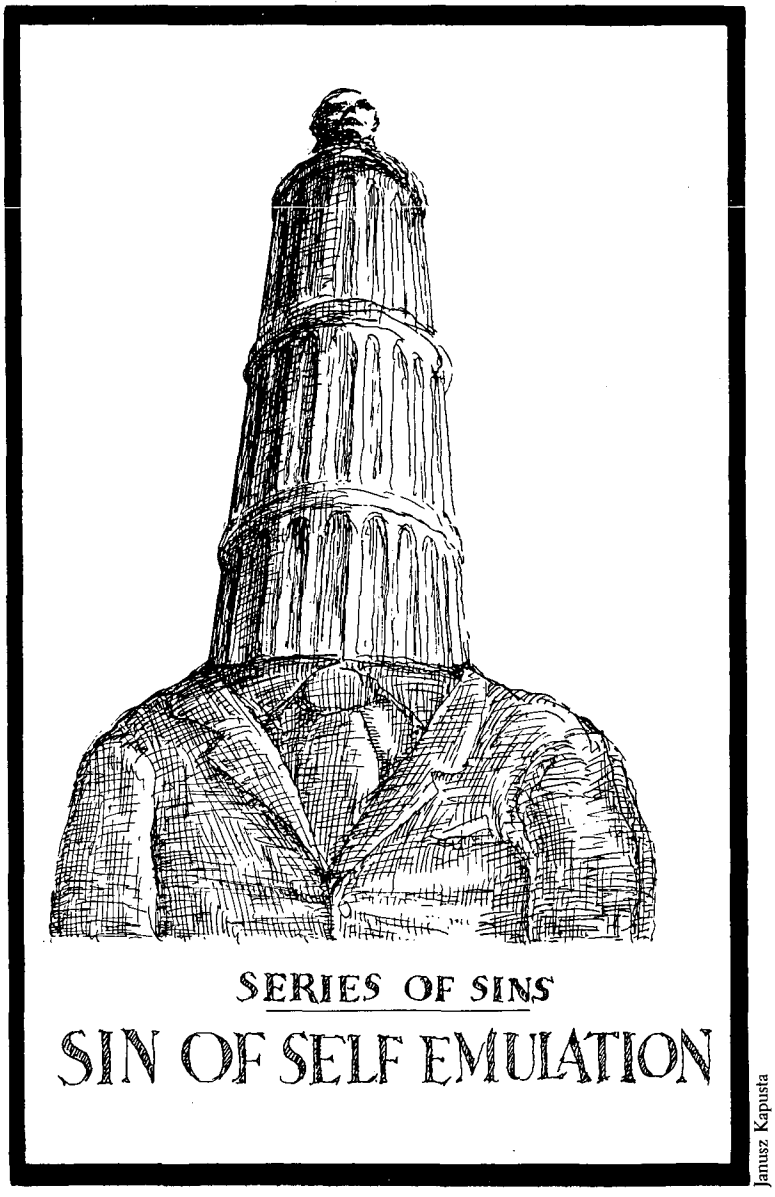
Sandra Murphy, the administrative hearing officer who oversaw the case, told the AP reporter that she did not think the decision would set a precedent, by which she can only have meant it was a bad decision. The case, amusing in itself as a comment on the mind of Rhode Island officialdom, raises serious questions about church-state relations.

The conventional view, promoted most loudly by those who stand to gain the most, is that religious bodies somehow stand outside the boundaries of jurisprudence. In the name of religious freedom, men and women have a right to shelter income or pay no taxes, refuse to discharge their military and civil obligations, and engage in illegal activities. Since matters of the spirit take precedence over matters of the flesh, it is not up to the state or the people to determine which religions they are willing to tolerate.

All of this sounds harmless enough until we come up against the hard cases. The mass-murderer Jim Jones was a religious leader. A little intolerance would have saved lives. Charles Manson's family is usually described as a "cult" and their murders labeled as "ritual killings." Obviously no one wants to extend the First Amendment that far, but what of the practitioners of Santeria and Voodoo who, at the very least, violate state and municipal health codes by torturing and slaughtering animals? For years we have heard that such practices were bizarre and even offensive but deserved protection. Religious conservatives and anti-cult groups both made the point that Santeria was in itself disgusting and implied a view of life that was inherently dangerous. This criticism was set down to ethnocentrism and nativism, a failure to appreciate how our culture was being enriched by Third World immigrants. When bodies began turning up on the Mexican border, the defenders of non-European culture were given a taste of what they were defending.

It is difficult but not impossible for a prudent nation to draw a line separating cults from religions. There are no hard and fast rules, but some of the distinguishing marks of a cult include recent origin (although Voodoo is as old as the Prince of Lies himself), a charismatic leader who exercises near absolute power over the lives of his followers, and a deliberate seclusion from the ordinary world. Exception can be taken to every one of these clauses, and in the end it is up to a people to determine just how tolerant they are willing to be.

The natural process of history has a way of sorting things out. Liabilities against Catholics were stupid in 19th-century England, but it made a great deal of political sense in the 17th century, and while Protestants always find restrictions on their celebrations and missions deplorable, it is hard not to sympathize with Catholic rulers who



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did not wish to see their people divided by religious strife. The prime case today is Israel, where Orthodox Jews have fought adamantly against the construction of a Brigham Young facility for fear of Mormon missionizing.

In religious matters the Romans were a most tolerant people and accorded legitimacy to a wide variety of sects, including Judaism but not Christianity. In the official view, Christianity was dangerous because of its allegedly bizarre practices—e.g., cannibalism and fornication—and because it taught its converts to be bad citizens who would refuse to shoulder their obligations. The Romans were wrong. With few exceptions, Christians were good Roman citizens, and their support was vital to Constantine's revitalization of the empire. However, if the Romans had been correct, if Christians really were no different from Santeros, and if they really did teach what we now call the doctrine of Civil Disobedience, then the Romans were obliged to stop the spread of a cult so pernicious to civilization and social order. (TF)

PUBLICLY FUNDED ART is causing a stir now in Los Angeles, where a mural citing (in part) the Pledge of Allegiance has drawn fire from a neighborhood group. The Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee complained that placing a mural featuring the pledge above LA's Little Tokyo was, at the very least, insensitive to the feelings of Japanese-Americans who suffered forced detention and were asked to take loyalty oaths during World War II. Kats Kunitsugu, of the committee, told the LA *Times* that "I thought it was quite a slap in the face." Another member of the neighborhood group, Alan Furuta, said that the mural's citing of the pledge and its general similarity to the American flag would "bring up old wounds and feelings."

The artwork is all text and poses questions such as "WHO IS BOUGHT AND SOLD? WHO IS BEYOND THE LAW? WHO IS FREE TO CHOOSE? WHO FOLLOWS ORDERS?" Originally, the pledge was to be in the center of the mural, prominently in all caps. It is now in smaller letters running along the top and bottom of the mural's rectangle, while the questions are in larger type and in the center.

LA's Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), so far from ramming the mural down Little Tokyo's throat, immediately opened up discussion between the artist (Barbara Kruger) and those angry with the proposal, and came to the compromise. Kruger is no Richard Serra: she has stated that she is willing to make further changes, if necessary.

The mural was funded in part by the NEA and the California Arts Council, which is supported by NEA as well as state tax money.

What comes immediately to mind are the obvious objections that a running series of essentially nonsense questions is not art, and that my federal tax dollars, levied on earnings made in Illinois, should not be decorating downtown Los Angeles. But if I am to live in a world with federally funded art, then in this case I must grant that MOCA did the right thing in respecting the feelings of the community group. It is very distressing, however, that basic patriotic symbols of America like the flag and the Pledge of Allegiance are deemed offensive by at least some of California's Japanese-Americans. And after witnessing the enormous stink that it took to get rid of the Serra sculpture in New York, is it only the cynic in me that makes me ask if MOCA—and the artist—would have been so accommodating had the complaint not come from a minority group that is still, 44 years later, furious with its country? (KD)

THE NEW YORK STATE public restroom equality law, popularly being referred to as "the potty parity act," is no laughing matter. Rather, it takes away gains achieved by men in their long struggle, starting with the establishment of the first public restroom, to receive some degree of compensation for past inequities. The purpose of the new law, passed on June 21, 1989, is to reduce the time women spend waiting in line to use public restrooms. Before the law was passed men's rooms, as they should be, were better equipped than women's. Both had the same number of toilets, but men had urinals as well. Henceforward, both toilets and urinals will be counted as "sanitary fixtures." All restrooms will contain the same number of fixtures, which means that toilets will have to be added to the ladies' rooms.

The blatant insensitivity to the needs of men perpetrated by the new arrangement becomes glaringly evident from the merest glance at the history of human elimination. For example, a recent illustrated volume, *The Vanishing American Outhouse*, explains why wooden outhouses featured a crescent moon on their doors. Originally, it seems, a sun indicated a men's facility and a crescent moon one for women. But, to quote *The New York Times Book Review* of July 2, 1989, "Since the women's outhouses were generally kept in better repair than the men's, more of them survived, until finally the moon became the universal outhouse trademark." In other words, for the better part of American history *women* enjoyed the superior restroom facilities.

What follows from this history of privilege is clear. Men, having suffered severe outhouse deprivation in the past, were just beginning to be compensated in the supposedly more enlightened 20th century when, perversely, the New York State legislature gave the advantage back to women. Consider just what it was that men suffered in the past—and had continued to suffer in some respects right

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down to the present. For decades, even centuries, the icy blasts of winter hissed through the slats of poorly maintained men's outhouses, some of which no doubt collapsed onto their defenseless users, causing embarrassment and in many cases personal injury.

But from a cultural point of view the male outhouse disadvantage was even more severe. For in the first place who but men were euchred into providing the superior maintenance for women's outhouses? The habits of servility and self-sacrifice engendered by the imposition of responsibility for outhouse maintenance on men have failed to be stamped out to this day. In the second place, a precious part of the male cultural legacy was further eroded with every outhouse collapse. There came a point when men no longer knew that they once had enjoyed outhouses of their own. The very symbol of men's once proud eliminatory status—the sun on the outhouse door—was lost from their gender memory.

It has been argued, the *Times* reports, that "since women spend more time in the bathroom than men, women will still have to wait longer than men if each restroom has the same number of sanitary fixtures." But this is to apply crude numerical values in an area where men have suffered psychological injuries of a kind that simply cannot be measured. The legislature, instead of tinkering with the definition of "sanitary fixtures," should be exhibiting some sensitivity and understanding for what men have lost. The lawmakers could begin by providing that all children, male and female, receive mandatory instruction in the male outhouse experience. As for the contemporary restroom, the male advantage deriving from urinals should be restored until such time as men have been compensated for the physical abuse and cultural deprivation they suffered in the past.

—*Peter Shaw*

GEORGE GARRETT, the novelist, and zoologist Edward O. Wilson are the recipients of the 1989 Ingersoll Prizes. Garrett will receive the T.S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing; and Wilson, the Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters. The awards, each of which carries a cash prize of $20,000, acknowledge writers of abiding importance whose works affirm the fundamental principles of Western civilization.

George Garrett was born in Orlando, Florida, in 1929, and received his M.A. from Princeton in 1956. He has published over 25 major works of fiction and poetry and is currently the Hoyns Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Virginia. Peter Prescott of *Newsweek* wrote of his Elizabethan work, *Death of the Fox* (1971), that it is "surely the best historical novel in many years." For his historical scholarship on this book and *The Succession* (1983), Princeton awarded him a Ph.D. Garrett's recent works include *An Evening Performance* (1985), a collection of short stories; and *Poison Pen* (1986), a series of satirical letters. He has recently completed the forthcoming *Entered From the Sun*, a novel about the mystery surrounding the death of Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe.

Edward O. Wilson was born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1929, and in 1955 received his Ph.D. from Harvard, where he is Frank B. Baird, Jr. Professor of Science and Curator in Entomology. Known as the "father of sociobiology," the discipline that investigates the biological foundations of social behavior in men and animals, his book *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (1975) earned him the National Medal of Sciences. Wilson's other major works include *On Human Nature* (1978), which won the Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction; *The Insect Societies* (1971); and, most recently, *Biophilia* (1984), in which he explores the connections between man and the green enclaves of the planet—our natural affinity for other life.

The Ingersoll Foundation is the philanthropic division of Ingersoll Milling Machine Company of Rockford, Illinois. The Rockford Institute administers the prizes. Past recipients of the T.S. Eliot Award include Walker Percy (1988), Octavio Paz (1987), V.S. Naipaul (1986), Eugene Ionesco (1985), Anthony Powell (1984), and Jorge Luis Borges (1983). Edward Shils (1988), Josef Pieper (1987), Andrew Lytle (1986), Robert Nisbet (1985), Russell Kirk (1984), and James Burnham (1983) are previous recipients of the Richard M. Weaver Award.

WE WISH ALSO to congratulate Joseph Epstein and Ward Just, the 1989 recipients of Heartland Prizes. Mr. Epstein, the editor of *The American Scholar*, was a winner in nonfiction for his collection of literary criticism, *Partial Payments*, and Mr. Just won the prize in fiction for his eighth novel, *Jack Gance*. Heartland Prizes carry a cash prize of $5,000 each, and they are given annually by the *Chicago Tribune* to authors living in the heart of America or whose books feature "distinguished writing about the places and people of Middle America."

ILLEGAL ALIENS rank high on any social reformer's list of priorities. At the very time millions of tax dollars are being spent to patrol our borders and to prosecute the illegals, CUNY—the City University of New York—announced in August that not only will it continue to welcome illegal aliens into its fold, but it will now be happy to give them a tuition break. Starting this fall illegal aliens will no longer have to pay CUNY's annual out-of-state tuition rate of $4,050. If they can prove one year's residence in New York, and if they will declare their intent to remain in the state, they will now be entitled to enroll at the annual *resident* tuition rate of only $1,250.

CUNY's University Dean for Student Services, Mr. Angelo Proto, believes that this new policy could affect some 7,500 "undocumented students." When asked whether by "undocumented students" he meant "illegal aliens," he replied, "We call them undocumented students."

According to Mr. Proto the new tuition policy was enacted to help "extend higher education to *all* residents of New York," whether they be "documented or undocumented." He was quick to add, "We aren't doing anything different from what the city of New York and other cities are doing." And he's right. The city of New York *does* extend social services to residents regardless of citizenship status, and this summer a committee of New York's City Council approved a law to prohibit discrimination based on a person's "alienage or citizenship status," meaning discrimination against legal *and* illegal aliens would now be prohibited. Although the Council maintains it will

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not contradict federal laws concerning the hiring of illegal residents, the proposed law would prohibit discrimination against illegal aliens in the areas of housing and education. Quotas on behalf of illegal aliens are just around the corner.

Dean Proto was also correct in noting that New York is not alone in providing social services to citizens and noncitizens alike. As FAIR (the Federation for American Immigration Reform) recently reported, the state bar of Texas provides free legal services to illegal aliens of Central American origin who now reside in the southern part of the state. And in one of the poorest counties in Texas, Hidalgo County, former illegal aliens—those who received amnesty during last year's legalization program—continue to receive free health care and prescriptions, while such services have been terminated for the other American citizens in the county, virtually all of whom are also of Hispanic ancestry and just as needy.

Of course, it is the citizenry who legally reside in these communities who should be outraged by the spending of taxpayers' dollars on social services for persons who are in the country illegally, who typically pay no taxes, and who perform none of the civic duties expected of citizens of this country. If illegal aliens contribute anything at all, it is to the well-being of either the employers who treat them as chattel and pay them slaves' wages, or the countries they *return* to after receiving their American education. Historically speaking, education has never been a good producer of foreign policy dividends. The Japanese officers of World War II who traded stories with their American captives about life on American campuses were not entirely the invention of scriptwriters. Even more outrageous were the hundreds of Iranian students attending American colleges and universities on expired visas, who demonstrated against their host country in 1979. In neither case did an American education prevent the denunciation of America as evil incarnate.

Call it "nativist," "alarmist," or even "ethnocentric," but an eighteen-year-old kid from a hardworking, lower-middle-class, blue-collar family in New Jersey has a right to be outraged when a financial aid officer at a New York City college tells him this fall that he would have had a better chance of funding his college education if he had come into this country on the underside of a truck and sold himself as slave labor for a year in the City. Financial aid officers at CUNY, however, reassured me that they will continue to be staunchly legalistic in denying financial assistance to American males who have yet to register with the Selective Service. Illegal aliens, of course, need not worry about such things: in case of war the country to which they immigrated and which provides them with free legal services, medical care, and tuition breaks will be adequately defended by the lower-middle-class kid from New Jersey who paid CUNY's out-of-state tuition.

The American citizens of New York City need to remind CUNY and New York's City Council that the only "right" illegal aliens have in our country is to be treated humanely during their period of detention and deportation. But perhaps there's still hope. Upon asking an administrator at CUNY's central Office of Admissions whether he *really* believed his employer should be lowering tuition for illegal residents, he declared, "Hell no! We should turn 'em in!" Exactly. (TP)

Letter From Washington
by Samuel Francis

WHEN THE 80TH annual convention of the NAACP gathered in solemn conclave in Detroit last July, the delegates listened approvingly to Executive Director Benjamin Hooks' call for "civil disobedience on a mass scale that has never been seen in this country before." Mr. Hooks was upset that the Supreme Court recently delivered itself of some rulings against affirmative action, and he threatened unprecedented shenanigans if Congress "is reluctant" to reverse these rulings through legislation. But Mr. Hooks' rhetoric was familiar to the delegates' ears. Martin Luther King, Jr., whom the NAACP once criticized for being too reckless, long ago developed the politics and oratory of intimidation into a high science.

What surely but pleasantly surprised the delegates was to hear, the following day, rhetoric not very different from that of Mr. Hooks from the lips of a member of the Bush administration, a former Republican congressman, and one of the more clamorous claimants to the now-vacant throne of American conservatism. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Jack Kemp did not, it is true, threaten to chain himself to the lamp posts on Capitol Hill if elected public servants choose to vote against his wishes. But he did succeed in rather subtly endorsing the core of the political ideology that has animated the NAACP and the rest of the American left for most of this century.

Mr. Kemp began his speech with warm praise for Mr. Hooks, and that might be dismissed as a mere obligation of courtesy. But the housing czar proudly repeated Mr. Hooks' endorsement of him for his present position at HUD. Mr. Hooks "said I was a liberal with a big 'L' on relations between the races," beamed Mr. Kemp, "And, Ben, I won't let you down." He kept his commitment to uplift Mr. Hooks throughout the rest of the speech, affirming "what a thrill it was the other day to sit next to Ben Hooks at the White House, as President Bush and distinguished civil rights leaders and members of Congress celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a milestone on the road to freedom and justice."

After generous applications of progressivist boiler-plate from Dr. King, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson, and after praise for, among others, Hubert Humphrey and W.E.B. DuBois, Mr. Kemp got down to business. He cheered "the boycotts, the sit-ins, the marches, the legal challeng-

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es" of the 1950's and 60's—"I wasn't there, but I wish I had been"—as "Chapter One" in what promises to be a kind of civil rights equivalent of a Russian novel. "Chapter One" was "about freedom and justice, about removing legal barriers, about full rights for each and every one of us as American citizens." But "Chapter One" is not the end of the story.

"At the dawn of a new millennium," sang Mr. Kemp, "we are engaged in a new chapter of this ongoing revolution, for as you in the NAACP have said so well, 'The Struggle Continues.'" "Chapter Two" (how many chapters there are Mr. Kemp didn't say) will be "about economic prosperity, about jobs for everyone, and growth, and a bigger pie and more seats at the table." The specific contents of "Chapter Two," in Mr. Kemp's reading, include enterprise zones, tax breaks, privatization of public housing, and a good many other ideas that he intends as "free market," "entrepreneurial," or opportunity-enhancing alternatives to liberal paternalism.

Such alternatives may or may not be enacted and may or may not work if they are, but they seem to be harmless enough and are probably worth trying. The problem with Mr. Kemp's speech, and with the general approach to American blacks that his fellow Republican outreachers such as Newt Gingrich, Lee Atwater, and President Bush are articulating, is not that they want to rely on free enterprise to ameliorate the material life of blacks but that they encase their ostensibly free market policies in a rhetorical and conceptual framework that contradicts them.

In affirming that "Chapter Two" is "not only about a chance to drive a truck, but a chance to own the truck . . . not just a chance to have a job, but a chance to own the company," Mr. Kemp implicitly conceded that the much-touted equality before the law, which "Chapter One" was supposed to have achieved, wasn't enough. After recounting statistics on black economic progress in recent years, the secretary explicitly assured his audience that "clearly, this is not enough."

> It only serves to remind us how far we have to go. Over half a century ago, Franklin D. Roosevelt saw one-third of a nation ill-clad, ill-housed, and ill-fed. By 1987, the GNP had increased eightfold; and still—56 years after FDR's statement—one-third of black Americans remained below the poverty line . . . ill-clad, ill-housed, ill-fed.

Behind all of Mr. Kemp's invocations of the free market and the individual unfettered by cumbersome laws and economic regulations, there lies the hidden assumption that it is the duty of government (specifically, the federal government) not only to ensure economic opportunity for all citizens alike through equality before the law, but also to ensure economic success. If Mr. Kemp happens to believe market rather than paternalistic policies are the best instruments to carry out this supposed duty, he has nevertheless granted a basic precept of socialism in acknowledging that the state ought to be involved in the design of economic results, and that if those results are not equal, they aren't just.

That, of course, is what the NAACP wants to hear. It's what most of its delegates and members believe; it's what Dr. King, Hubert Humphrey, and Dr. DuBois (who joined the Communist Party at the age of 98) believed; and it's why Mr. Hooks is so mad about the Court's rulings against affirmative action, the purpose of which is to fix the results whenever race is a factor in the competition. It's also why, for all Mr. Kemp's apologetics for his past, his party, and his political persuasions, the NAACP is not going to listen to his endorsement of the "market," the "opportunity society," or other slogans of entrepreneurial capitalism. Those slogans, if taken seriously, presuppose a limited and neutral state, equality before the law but not of condition, and a "level playing field" on which all the players compete under the same rules. Whether such classical liberal ideals are at all possible or desirable is another question, but they are utterly incompatible with the kind of governmental intervention in social and economic arrangements for the achievement of particular results that the NAACP demands and is willing to break the law to obtain.

By recapitulating not only an affirmation of egalitarian social reconstruction through political means but also a celebration of the liberal heroes, icons, and slogans of the civil rights movement, Mr. Kemp and his fellow outreachers may in fact gain the votes of black Americans and perhaps even the support of Mr. Hooks and the NAACP. But let us not deceive ourselves that such gains would represent any victory for "conservatism." Rather they would represent a consolidation of liberal values and the crystallization of the liberal mentality among blacks and their (largely self-appointed) leaders as well as among (largely self-proclaimed) conservatives. They would constitute the modern equivalent of finding out which way the crowd is running, getting in front of it, and announcing yourself as its leader. Once conservatives accept, as Mr. Kemp evidently does, the legitimacy of egalitarian reconstruction, it will be far easier to continue and revive reconstruction through the bureaucratic paternalism in which black Americans remain trapped and in which their leadership maintains a powerful vested political interest, than through the entrepreneurial renaissance that Mr. Kemp promises.

A different approach that conservatives might use to attract not only black but also more white votes is to talk about (and deal seriously with) things that really matter to most Americans—crime and the need for swift, certain, and strong punishment for it; the family, community, religion, and other social institutions that control violence; and the senselessness of a centralized, bureaucratic, social engineering government that not only impedes "opportunity," but also displaces and destroys the social bonds and disciplines that are the only real creators of opportunity or of the ambition to use it well.

Maybe this kind of rhetorical and conceptual framework, reflecting genuinely conservative ideas, wouldn't gain Mr. Hooks' endorsement, and maybe black Americans are already so enslaved to Mr. Hooks, the NAACP, and the other lobbies of the civil rights establishment that they wouldn't buy it either. But there's more to political leadership than winning votes, and maybe conservatism with a big "C" is what politicians who claim to be conservatives and serious public leaders ought to be talking about. ◈

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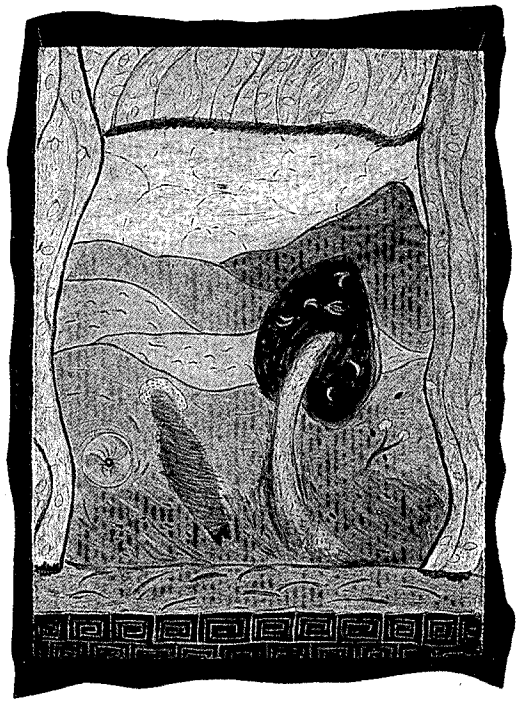

The Cow in the Trail

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Even in mid-September you cannot go comfortably by day into the deserts of southeastern Utah. Together the late Edward Abbey and I rented horses and rode into the La Sal mountains, following what began as a dirt road and ended as a trail at an elevation of approximately 10,500 feet. From the mountain pass, we looked northwest between triangled peaks of pinkish-gray talus across the fantastically elaborate redness of the Colorado Plateau, at whose red heart the Green and Colorado Rivers achieve conflux. Twenty miles to the northwest, the old uranium town of Moab, now a mecca for river rats and mountain bikers, glittered like a tin-can dump in the haze below the purple sandstone tumuli of Arches National Monument. This is—will always be—to the literate (as well as the not-so-literate) Abbey's Country: locus of his experience and of his work, geological embodiment of his life's concern.

The cow lay on her back in the road, her belly grossly distended between the boundary stakes of her rigid upturned legs, the hind ones spread away from a porridge of writhing maggots. Ed worked his horse with difficulty around the carcass while my own, a well-grained mare called Beefy, tried to bolt away up the cutbank where she would be splendidly positioned to lose her footing and roll her twelve or thirteen hundred pounds over me. I got her safely past finally and rode up beside Ed, whose face expressed a disgust incommensurate with the stench we had just ridden through. We were in timber now; fool-hens rocketed under the chins of the horses, making them start and crowhop. I had my field glasses out, looking for elk. At the sound of bodies crashing among the trees I was off the horse and on one knee, glassing the shadows for flashes of tan; then Ed laughed. "Slow elk," he said, as a herd of white-faced cattle trotted heavily into the grassy park ahead. "Dirty, stinking, bawling, s--t-smeared brutes. Four-legged lawnmowers. . . ."

After supper that evening Ed reverted to the subject of the presence of livestock—sheep and beef cattle—on the public range. He had had a letter on the subject published earlier that summer in the *Moab Times-Independent*, that had not been well-received by the town fathers, who accused him of "pissing on the town of Moab." Ed had accepted their reaction with equanimity. Two years before he had flown from his home in Tucson to Missoula, Montana, where he had delivered a lecture entitled "Free Speech: The Cowboy and His Cow" to an audience of what he later described as "five or six hundred students, ranchers, and instant rednecks [transplanted Easterners]" who also had failed to respond like ladies and gentlemen to his remarks. These began, "When I first came West in 1948 . . . I thought, like most simple-minded Easterners, that a cowboy was a kind of mythic hero. I idolized those scrawny little red-nosed hired hands in their tight jeans, funny boots, and comical hats," and ended with jeers, "a sit-

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ting ovation," and "gunfire in the parking lot." Ed's thesis, briefly stated, was that the public-lands beef industry is a public scandal and an ecological disaster, resulting in overgrazing and other forms of environmental mayhem; that "Western cattle-men are nothing more than welfare parasites" who have been "getting a free ride on the public lands for over a century"; and that these nuisances deserve to be put out of business through the elimination of federal subsidies, including especially grazing leases acquired at token cost.

Edward Abbey was, of course, a maverick. Still, on this particular subject, he was something more comfortable than *vox clamantis in deserta*; "Cattle-Free by Ninety-three" is a cry nearly as ubiquitous in the deserts of the West and Southwest today as the peculiar wind-down call of the canyon wren, though no one I have talked with seems to know its origin. Steve Johnson, of Defenders of Wildlife, had it from Earth First!, a militant organization directly inspired by the publication of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Ed's comic novel of lust and ecotage on the Colorado Plateau; while Lynn Jacobs, who lives in Tucson and is writing a book about the cattle problem, has no idea where the slogan comes from. The movement generated by it, he explained, is a decentralized one, like Earth First! itself: people hand out bumper stickers, have demonstrations, write books and articles. Johnson, who believes that under the present (century-old) system of public land management, "Two percent of the nation's beef is being paid for by our wildlife species," would like — personally — to see that the political influence of the public-lands rancher is reduced to something commensurate with his economic contribution. He believes that, though more has been written on the subject in the past four or five years than in all the previous ones, "Cattle-Free by Ninety-three" is an issue generally avoided by environmentalists, who have concluded that here is a battle they cannot hope to win. Nevertheless, the excellent environmentalist paper *High Country News*, published biweekly in Paonia, Colorado, regularly documents the controversy between often hard-scrabble ranchers throughout the Rocky Mountain West and their critics, who accuse them of every misdeed from shooting supposedly predatory eagles and certainly predatory grizzly bears to starving and strangling migratory antelope by means of their countless miles of "bob-war" fencing. If only it were not for those greedy and insensitive sheep and cattle men (the argument goes), the elk herds would have pasture to winter them safely, allowing them to increase and multiply; congressional delegations could not be intimidated from agreeing to the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone; the Indian tribes (and everyone else) would have plenty of water; and backpackers in transit to wilderness areas would not get their scientifically-sophisticated hiking shoes mired in soft surprises. Throughout the American West, the rancher today is perceived to be the single greatest threat to the environment since the oil companies all went bust together at the start of the 1980's.

When I moved West a decade ago and began reading Edward Abbey's books, I thought his attitude toward ranchers and ranching distinctly unromantic and not a little unfair; ten years later, I am not so sure. Though I spend my life away from the typewriter roaming the territories controlled by the National Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management and am thus able to testify that the exploitation of the range is an undeniable fact and a cause for serious concern, I have not — yet — succumbed to Cattle-Free Fever. On the other hand, I have definitely lost, in whatever degree I ever possessed it, the romantic attitude I once had toward ranching as a way of life and ranchers themselves as human beings. Ranchers have indeed, as Abbey claimed, been on the receiving end of the federal pipeline for too long. They are accustomed to getting something for almost nothing, their justification for this largess being that their lives are harder than anyone else's and their economic condition more precarious, while their traditional existence remains worthy of perpetuation at whatever cost to the taxpayer and society in large. The truth is that, taken as a class, they have become something of a collective prig. Mention horseback riding to a rancher and he will explain to you how he despises being on a horse and would never set foot in the stirrup were it not for the demands of his calling. Mention hunting (except for coyote) and he will remark that he has no time for such frivolity. In whatever interchange with too many ranchers, you will find yourself cast in the role of the amateur being condescended to by the professional. As between the two of you, he and he alone has felt the hard hand of an implacable fate: he is the man, you are the boy. . . . I don't buy it, but the government does. And has, for something over a century now.

Perhaps that is merely a personal reaction on my part. What is definitely *not* personal, however, is the feeling that the relationship between the agriculturalist, whether Eastern farmer or Western rancher, and the land upon which he depends for his livelihood is no longer what it once was — or was perceived to be — and that the myth of the American husbandman has hardened in consequence into a brittle solidity, and finally crumbled away altogether. This development is partly the result of the farm support structure that has been welded into place since World War I, partly that of the progressive mechanization and depersonalization of the highly scientific industry that is modern agriculture. More fundamental, I think, is the sea change that has occurred in Western assumptions regarding man's proper relationship to the earth and to the natural world.

For millennia that relationship was considered to be symbiotic — in other words, a working one. To be in harmony with nature meant to husband nature; to develop the potential within it towards its own greater fruition and the needs of man. We read this idea clearly in the literature of the ancients, particularly the Latin poets. In the early days of the American Republic, the classical ideal of man maintaining harmonic equipoise between himself and nature was reiterated by General Washington who, echoing the sentiments of Cincinnatus, spoke lovingly of retiring to Mt. Vernon to repose once again beneath his "vine and fig tree." The harmonic theme was elaborated upon by the apologists for the Southern tradition for at least two decades before the outbreak of the Civil War, and received its final restatement in American culture from the Southern Agrarians in the 1930's, whose point was further understood by that unaligned literary comet, William Faulkner. Since then, however, a revolution has occurred, through which the Bierstadt Mentality has prevailed over the bucolic ideal.

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Albert Bierstadt was a German-born American painter who traveled widely in the American West in the 1860's and 70's and produced the most excruciatingly ethereal paintings of the Rocky Mountains, in which Nature is a cathedral flooded by exalting unearthly light on the threshold of which Man stands, staring in awe through an invisible portal. Today, the Bierstadt Mentality is a staple of every Pilgrim's gear, along with his inner-frame backpack, his Sun Shower, and his Water Purifier kit, as he trudges away on his annual Wilderness Experience. By that word, "wilderness," he means a place in which, while there may be men, there is no sign of man, his works, or his chattels: for the true Pilgrim, the sight of a fire ring or a circle grazed around a pine tree by a snubbed pack horse is an attack upon the authenticity of his quest. (For your Enlightened Backpacker, in fact, the Appalachian Mountains of the 18th century, which our forefathers regarded as a howling wilderness, would be no wilderness at all, overrun as it was in those days by Indians living in *villages* and equipped with the latest *Formative technology*.) Today, the socially approved way in which to get close to nature is not to husband it, to wrestle with it as hunters and farmers have always been required to do, and still must, mingling blood and sweat with snow, rain, and mud, but rather to disengage from it in a fundamental way, the presumption being that man in his contact and engagement with nature can only defile it. Leave only footprints, take only pictures, as the Pilgrims from New York, Denver, and Los Angeles like to say. But—can anyone really imagine a backpacker *ranching*?

As late as the 1930's, novelists, critics, and academics—many of them semi-urbanized, though raised in a rural setting and among rural values; Richard Weaver is a good example of the type—still worried in a more-than-abstract way about the future of the family farm and the superstructure of values and traditions erected upon an agricultural existence. Today, most artists and intellectuals are thoroughgoing cosmopolites whose idea of "the country" is a room with a view at Yaddo: when we hear someone refer to "the plight of the farmer," the speaker is much more than likely to be a) himself a farmer or rancher; b) a New Class technocrat looking for a Social Problem to solve; or c) an urban journalist in search of a Pulitzer-Prize-winning subject of Significance. While the conversation is going on, the Nature Boys are backpacking through the Bridger-Teton Wilderness in Wyoming: yuppies in sneakers and short pants laying claim to territories won over a century and a half ago by strong men on horseback, bearing for weapons the latest technology available to them, wresting a precarious living from what the land had to offer, and enduring the rages and inauspices of nature throughout *four* seasons—the nearest equivalent we have, in other words, to our modern ranchers, never mind their bellyaching, their philosophical narrowness, and all their checks and supports from a prodigal government in Washington. ◈

The Summerhouse

by Charles Edward Eaton

One has this vision of the summerhouse when the peonies bloom:
White, latticed at the eaves, a romance of the past,
It conjures lovers who are looking for a mortal and immortal room.

It takes a hint from pink, and, there beyond—flamingo lake.
Those mortal birds that look so posed and so contrived
Are wading in a world in which our lovers want a stake.

They want the peony-blush, the brilliant feather, and the bluest sky—
Yesterday they ate their half a loaf and threw the crust away,
And they have come here, in extravagance, expecting crumbs to multiply.

How can one say to her: Not quite, not absolutely all, my dear—
Tomorrow the selfsame loaf upon the selfsame table,
The dying strains of *liebestod* in your lover's ruddy ear.

One cannot say it yet because one also wants the whole—
An athlete of desire has flung the peony like a shot expanding:
Here the summerhouse, and there flamingos wading in the soul.

The famished heart, the flinging—the idea of the Idea of whole bread—
The rumps of flowers ruffle in the wind where the shot puts down:
I listen, listen to the plashing in the water, and then the silent tread.

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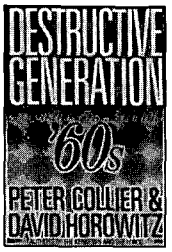

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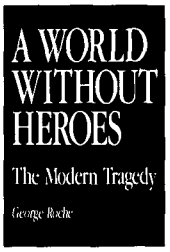

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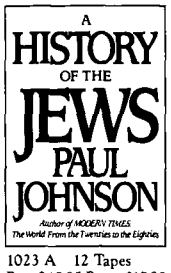

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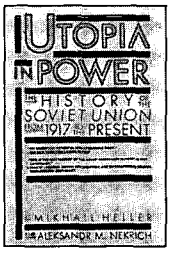

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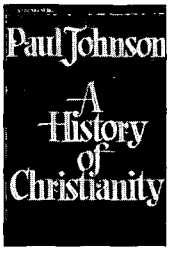

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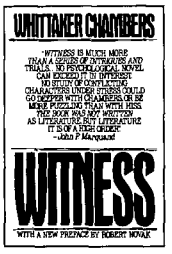

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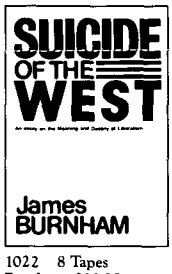

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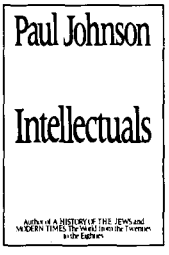

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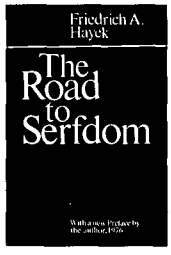

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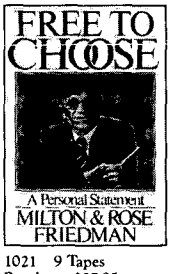

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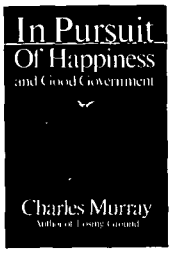

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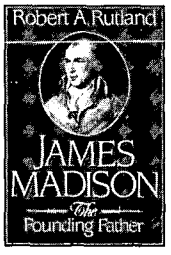

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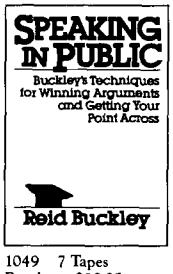

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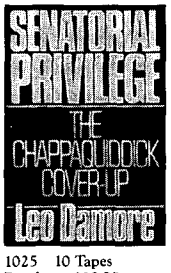

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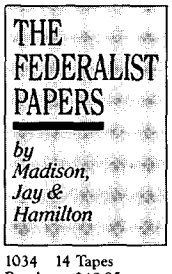

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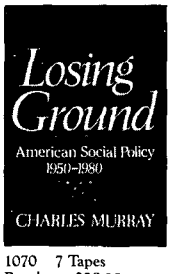

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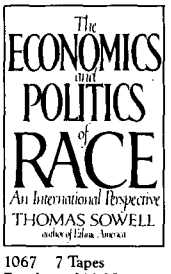

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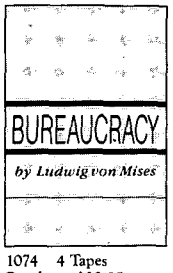

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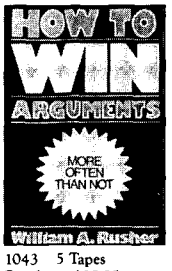

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The Lure of Rural Life

by Odie Faulk

Thomas Jefferson believed that virtue was to be found in the Spartan simplicity of ancient Greece rather than in the decadent cities of Caesar's Rome. Agriculture, Jefferson wrote, was what developed moral and political virtue. Big cities corrupted people, he thought, and neither city men of commerce and capital nor city men who labored could be trusted to preserve democracy. He idealized agriculture as a way of life and affected rustic dress and a casual pose in public. The secretary of the British legation commented that Jefferson as President looked like a "tall, large-boned farmer."

In 1801, when Jefferson took the oath as third President of the United States, some 95 percent of all Americans lived on farms. Jefferson tried to insure that this ratio would continue through the Louisiana Purchase of April 30, 1803. In fact, Jefferson so wanted this great block of land that he ignored his principles to get the treaty ratified.

A strict constitutionalist, he could find nothing in the Constitution authorizing the government to acquire new territory. At first he considered an amendment to authorize the purchase, but amending the Constitution took time. Jefferson therefore simply sent the treaty to the Senate for ratification, ignoring his constitutional scruples about what the government could or could not do. He felt that acquiring the Louisiana Territory was far more important than debates about the powers of the federal government, for, he reasoned, the Louisiana Territory would satisfy the American need for agricultural lands for the next five hundred years and thereby guarantee that the country forever would be a land of yeoman farmers.

Jefferson was not sufficiently optimistic about how fast Americans could move west and settle the Louisiana Territory. His dream of owning land had become the American dream. Americans wanted to be farmers, and they believed that virtue was on the land, not in cities. As Horace Greeley would urge them decades later, they went west, especially in the years after the Civil War.

During this period the government, along with most Americans, believed that the public domain should be put into the hands of those who would make productive use of it as fast as possible. This meant actually searching for ways to turn over public lands to farmers, miners, timbering concerns, and anyone else who would begin using the land. Legislation to this end included the Homestead Act of 1862, the Timber Culture Act of 1873, the Desert Land Act of 1877, and the Carey Act of 1894.

Also hastening the pace of settlement on the Plains were the slaughter of buffalo in the 1870's; the removal of the Indians to reservations, largely completed by 1877; and a

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period of adequate rainfall during the same period. Likewise, there was increased immigration from Europe by people anxious to own land, the introduction of improved farm machinery, and the building of railroads.

In fact, the railroads had as much — or more — to do with the rapid westward migration as did the government itself. The transcontinental railroads were the recipients of millions of acres of public land, and they set up "land departments" and "bureaus of immigration" that lured customers and arranged prices, sales, and credit. They, along with steamship companies, advertised in Europe, spending millions on brochures not closely related to the truth and sometimes using high-pressure selling methods.

The post-Civil War rush to the Great Plains was encouraged not only by the railroads and steamship companies, but also by local residents themselves. Their goal, of course, was to drive up their property values. Almost every state and territory put out literature designed to lure settlers west, as, for example, this from Dakota Territory in 1870:

> Think of it young man, you who are "rubbing" along from year to year, with no great hopes for the future, can you accept for a little while the solitude of nature and bear a few hard knocks for a year or two? Lay aside your paper gloves and kid gloves. Work a little. Possess your soul with patience and hold on your way with a firm purpose. Do this, and there is a beautiful home for you out here. Prosperity, freedom, independence, manhood in its highest sense, peace of mind and all the comforts and luxuries of life are awaiting you. The fountain of perennial youth is in the country, never in the city. Its healing, beautifying and restoring waters do not run through aqueducts. You must lie down on the mossy bank beneath trees, and drink from gurgling brooks and crystal streams. . . .
>
> Young men predominate in the West, while maidens are scarce; therefore I say to you, get yourself a wife and bring her with you. You will be happier and more contented, and, I have no doubt, make money faster.
>
> To young women I would say just a word. Out here
>
> "There is no goose so gray
> but soon or late,
> Will find some honest gander
> for a mate."
>
> Therefore, attach yourself to some family immigrating, and if you are over 21 years, your 160 acres of land, to which you are entitled, and your other attractions, will soon find you a nest and a mate.

Such advertising, along with government programs designed to put land into the hands of users as rapidly as possible, had the desired result. The amount of land in private ownership devoted to agriculture in the United States rose from 407 million acres in 1860 to 871 million acres by 1900. During the 1870's alone, Kansas gained 347,000 people, Nebraska 240,000, and other Plains states and territories in proportion.

Most of the farmers who rushed onto the Great Plains came armed with the courage of complete ignorance about what they faced. The inhospitable climate ranged from blizzards to searing heat. Recurring droughts turned much of the region into a desert, and grasshopper plagues filled the Plains farmer's cup of frustrations. The worst invasion occurred in 1874, when the whole area from the Dakotas to Texas was devastated. The grasshoppers ate everything, leaving, as one farmer said, nothing but the mortgage. Many farmers continued to fight the battle with nature. Others became cynical about Jefferson's dream; as they left their byword was, "In God we trusted; in Kansas we busted!"

Farmers were also plagued by falling prices and rising costs as they became too productive. By the mid-1880's the United States had a surplus of wheat, along with too much corn and other commodities. The farmer was caught in a squeeze. The price of what he produced was falling, while the cost of moving his crop to market was rising, as was the cost of farm machinery. As one settler bitterly stated, "The farmer sells wholesale and buys retail, but pays the freight both ways."

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These economic miseries sapped the spirit of many who settled the Plains, putting creases in their brows as they worried about losing the homeplace to the bank and becoming tenants on land which they had broken to the plow. And changing the look in their eyes from shining optimism to tearful pessimism was the stark and soul-wrenching loneliness of their existence.

The pattern of settlement on the Plains was to homestead individual plots of 160 acres, each family living on its own land. To provide them a place to shop and to market their crops, small towns were established at intervals of six to ten miles apart, and county boundaries were drawn some 30 miles square so that anyone (theoretically) could get to the county seat and back in a day's time. This was totally dissimilar to the practice in Europe, where farmers settled in walled villages, going out to their fields each day to work and then returning to their homes with their farm animals each night for security and protection. This meant that European towns were usually no more than three or four miles apart.

In 1896 there was a brief bit of relief from the economic misery of Plains farmers when drought caused poor harvests in Europe, and there was great farm prosperity during World War I. But the agricultural depression descended again in the early 1920's and was compounded by the necessity of buying farm machinery — great steam tractors and other types of steam-breathing behemoths. With them came more debt. When this could not be repaid, the bankers came to take the land. Tenancy was on the rise dramatically in the 1920's, and then was compounded in the 1930's when the Dust Bowl days came to blow Plains

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topsoil out into the Atlantic.

Another result of increased use of machinery was greater productivity per farmer—which, in turn, caused prices to fall and yet more bankruptcies. Machinery began to increase the average size of the farm from the 160 acres of the Homestead Act to 200 and then 300 acres and then more. By the 1950's the average size of a farm necessary for maximum efficiency had grown to some 600 acres, and the number of farmers working the land had dropped to 10 percent of the total population and then to 5 percent—and now is less than 3 percent. And the sale of farm machinery goes forward, always more expensive, always allowing greater productivity.

Today the size of a farm needed for maximum efficiency is approaching 1,500 acres—and there are cries that greater government help is needed. In 1988 the government's total appropriation for agriculture, if divided equally among all farmers, would be $19,000 each. Greater government aid might keep more farmers on the land, but the size of the farm necessary for maximum efficiency in ten years, by some estimates, will grow to 3,000 acres—which will drive yet more farmers into bankruptcy and bring the number living on the land down toward 2 percent and perhaps even less. Every day in every county it seems another aging farm couple sells out and heads for Florida or South Texas, leaving the farm to a corporation. And as farmers have left the land during the past 50 years, small towns likewise have withered.

Hard-surfaced farm-to-market roads and automobiles have enabled those still on the land to drive to bigger cities where they can make their purchases in larger stores, causing local merchants to close. In addition, educators have successfully argued that rural schools cannot provide the same quality schooling as larger ones in bigger cities. When the small-town school consolidates and the post office closes, the small town is terminally ill. Today there are many small towns that are only a shadow of their former selves, with abandoned buildings that match the farmsteads rotting and falling in across the countryside. To an increasing degree the West is getting empty again.

All these changes pose grave problems for America as we approach the 21st century. In 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner, a brash young historian, said the frontier was the birthplace of democracy in America. He argued that it was on the frontier that most truly American traits were born: individualism, freedom, inquisitiveness, ingeniousness, and materialism—people impatient of restraint yet willing to follow strong leadership. On the frontier most individuals were on the same economic level—poor—leading to a belief in programs of social amelioration as well as government programs encouraging individualism, freedom of opportunity, and the acquisition of wealth. Thus most frontiersmen wanted lenient land legislation, internal improvements at government expense (dams, removal of Indians, etc.), a protective tariff on agricultural products, and a central government strong enough to do these things. Simultaneously, however, these were people who had a strong distaste for authority, a belief in individual initiative, and a commitment to free enterprise.

By the 1930's, as more and yet more people moved off the land and into town, there was a great longing for "the good old days." Almost all of these people remembered their belief in the nobility of rural life, which, according to the growing myth, brought peace, security, kindness, honesty, and goodness. William Allen White, the famous Kansas newspaper editor, argued that "only those living in small towns have the true American ideals." Governor John Hammill of Iowa, speaking in 1929, asserted, "Rural life is a . . . beacon of virtues that cuts through the darkness of a world gone wrong."

Much of this is romantic nonsense, but there is truth that in the small towns of the Plains country we can see reflections of what our President calls "a kinder, gentler America," and rightfully we might ask, "Must the land be left to a few giant corporations to be farmed by company employees who commute to work each day from some city?" Must Americans approaching the 21st century choose between security and slums, honesty and crime, humanity and congestion? If the small town dies, is democracy in trouble?

We doubtless are never going back to the days of people living on small farms, the yeoman whom Jefferson hoped would be the backbone of the America he envisioned. There will be no great return to the land despite the fact that rural Americans now have a way of life infinitely better than that of their ancestors. The same technology that has given us giant tractors and combines and seed drills also has brought us television programs available by satellite dish. A farmer on the Plains on any given evening can choose baseball or ballet, football or Shakespeare, high drama or low comedy. In his living room he can watch the launch of *Discovery*, the proceedings of Congress, the grilling of a politician, or the violence of terrorists. Modern roads and cars enable us to get where we can use our plastic to buy all the goods our society makes available.

Is it the fate of people in small towns "not to succeed, but to continue to fail in good spirits," as Robert Louis Stevenson put it? Should they smile as small towns wither away?

Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is with a question: are the Plains states going to remain in economic thraldom to their industrialized neighbors to the East, analagous to Third World dependencies that export raw products and agricultural commodities in return for the goods and services they need?

The answer provided by almost everyone who studies the question is for small towns to attract industry—small businesses that provide jobs and payrolls to keep people in the area to enjoy the security, honesty, independence, integrity, and humanity reportedly found in these places. Not all residents need go out each morning from town to work a farm to retain those farmers' virtues. For most of us there will be no 160 acres and a mule nor a section of land and a giant tractor; rather it will be $14 an hour at the plant, a small plot of land for a garden, a pickup with a rifle in the back window, and a nearby lake for fishing. If jobs can be attracted to villages in Iowa, then the shining city on the hill, so often spoken of by our leaders, will once again be small-town America. ◈

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The (Unexpected) Comeback of the Small Farm

by Anita Evangelista

The word's been out for some time: *they're all gone, not a functioning one left*. Statistics coming down from on high in the 1970's "proved" that the small farm—defined as that with a total income of less than $20,000 annually—was about shot. This came as something of a surprise to those still living and working small farms.

What a "small farm" actually is has been a confusing issue for at least a century. The 1862 Homestead Act considered the 160-acre farm a small operation, worked by a single extended family with livestock-powered technology. By the 1940's, a small farm was synonymous with "part-time farm," "retirement farm," and "subsistence farm." It was the *family farm* that remained the backbone of the nation, one that required the work of a family and gave back a decent living.

After 1950, the "small farm" designation no longer applied to the physical size of the place, but instead to its gross income. In the 1960's, a small farm was any farming unit that sold less than $10,000 in produced goods. By the 70's, courtesy of an unstable economy and befuddled policies, the small farm was defined as selling less than $20,000. That twenty-grand number was supposed to be the break-even point—20G put in, 20G taken out. You had to make more than that to live.

By 1981, the definition of small had become so vague you could get included by selling apples grown on a backyard suburban tree, if you met these three requirements: the family provides most of the labor and management; farming provides a "significant portion," though not necessarily a majority, of family income; and the total family income from all sources is below the median non-metropolitan family income for the state.

Here in the Ozark Mountains of southern Missouri, that's just about everybody. Historically, the Ozarks have been virtually all "small farms," by anybody's definition. Timber-covered rugged hillsides dominate the region, and the soil is of a type that grows rocks better than any other crop. Most people on small farms around here raise livestock, and that is generally the variety that their daddy raised before them. Hogs are still king, with beef cattle coming in close behind. The "farm wife" generally works a full-time job in a nearby town.

One look at the University of Missouri's 1987 figures for farm profits will explain why that farmer's wife needs another job. To produce a single 600-pound calf, one that gets shipped somewhere else to be fattened for market, it will cost this farm $158 for feed, $273 for variable expenses including vet bills, and $56 for fixed expenses like operating equipment. That's a total cost of $329 to raise this hypothetical average calf. The same farmer could expect to sell that calf for $373, for a profit of $44.

Forty-four dollars cash profit per head. Let's see. How many calves would I have to produce each year to earn a poverty level net income? Roughly 250 calves. That means, first, I'd have to have the investment capital to be able to buy the initial 250 cows, and pasture land to handle them annually. If I bought cheap, cross-bred older cows at $500 a

Anita Evangelista lives on a farm in Peace Valley, Missouri.

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head, I'd spend $125,000 that first year on livestock alone (not counting feeding the blasted things), just to make my $11,000. Provided that sale prices remain stable and don't drop again, and every cow produces a live calf, and there are no increases in feed or variable costs, it would only take me a little over 11 years to make back my investment. I could then go on making a poverty level income indefinitely, provided I keep buying new cows as the old ones die off. My neighbor, who has a large spread (by Ozark standards) of 600 acres, can only produce 100 head yearly, and it's hard, full-time labor. His wife works in town, too.

Hogs are a much better bet. The University of Missouri indicates that if I had a big operation with around 87 sows, and I was raising them from birth to slaughter, I could make a 36.1 percent return on my investment . . . providing I had a $53,506 capital base. Here's the interesting part, though. The same figures show that I'd make a 21.9 percent return on my labor—which works out to *$7.31 per hour.*

Now, farmers are not stupid people. They're independent-minded, and stubborn sometimes, but not stupid. Farmers like to watch movies on the VCR, to go out to dinner occasionally, to take a vacation now and then. You just can't do that, and support a family, on $7.31 an hour; farmers know this.

As a result, something very interesting is happening. Farmers, here and there, are buying "exotic" livestock. One man spent $15,000 for a trio of lamas, a male and two females. A year later, he sold the two baby lamas that were produced for $10,000. The year after that, he sold two more for the same sum. Lamas don't eat any more than a cow, and also produce a secondary "crop" of valuable wool. This man is now making money. Real money.

There are farmers who specialize in buffalo, in elk, in fallow deer, in ostriches, and in wild cats. There are farmers who have stopped raising commercial white-fleeced sheep and switched to a "rare" breed. The exotic Jacob Sheep, for example, sports four dramatic horns. Registered animals sell for twice what a commercial sheep would, around $250 each.

Other farmers have found a market in "pet stock." A single purebred female Persian cat, for example, can produce five kittens, twice a year, that sell for $100 each to pet brokers. That's $1,000 annual gross to keep a cat (and her purebred boyfriend, of course), which costs the farmer about $300 in feed and related costs. He gets a pleasant set of housepets—and a much higher return than on cattle or hogs.

Of course, these exotics are not subject to government "protection" through subsidies. Across the nation, 82 cents of every farm dollar comes from government subsidies, and is it any wonder, with $44 calves, and bovine growth hormones turning dairy cows into veritable hydrants of milk in a nation that is already drowning in the stuff? Farmers who raise exotics keep a low profile and hope that the federal ag people won't notice what's going on.

Meantime, the truck-crop producers are not to be outdone. With the farm wife working away from home, and the farm husband busy with his $7.31-per-hour hogs, there's nobody at home to plant or tend a garden. Producing your own food has been the farmer's traditional way to cut his own costs—but who can afford the time nowadays? Mrs. Farmer, more often than not, shops at the same supermarket as her city-bred counterpart, buying lettuce and corn and carrots grown out-of-state on a huge monocrop estate.

These former farm wives remember what real food once tasted like, and they prefer to buy locally produced goods, from friends and neighbors. Once they could go to a "farmer's market" to trade, but these are no longer the hub of rural life, if they're held at all. Like the changes that have occurred with livestock, something new has replaced this open-air shopping.

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Agripreneurship is the solution to the death of the family farm.

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Again, it's happening in a small way—but catching on in out-of-the-way places. In Maine, one vegetable-growing family is feeding a hundred families off of six acres, producing cabbage, tomatoes, corn, peas, turnips, and a host of other traditional garden crops. That this produce is of the "organic" persuasion should be no surprise—the surprise is that it will cost each family of consumers about $320 for a full spring/summer/fall array of vegetables. In the supermarket, comparable crops would cost about $550. Hence the farm family has an instant market for whatever they grow, sales are guaranteed, no one is exposed to chemical pesticides, they can stay at home, work at their own pace, have plenty to eat—and have an "automatic" income of $32,000. Expenses would include the cost of seeds and maintenance of any garden tools, but that's it. In depressed rural areas like parts of Maine, the farmer is making a veritable fortune—and the consumers are getting top quality produce for one-third less than the best supermarkets can offer.

It's small-scale back in Missouri, as well. One farm wife here with an entrepreneurial bent went from shop to shop in one small town with a list of the crops she'd have available. People signed up for this "subscription vegetable" list, 15 families in all. Every couple of weeks she'll be delivering about ten to twenty pounds of just-picked vegetables to the families on her round, and taking home about $15 from each stop . . . that's $450 per month, not including extra sales when her customers want to load up their freezers. She's doing this on just two acres, with a hand-hoe. By next year, she'll have four acres under cultivation, and will probably pick up a dozen new subscribers.

Ron Macher, the affable publisher of *Missouri Farm*, picked up on this trend early. He was the first to use a descriptive term for these new farmers—he calls them "agripreneurs." Agripreneurship, whether in the guise of exotic animal production, or the humble act of growing zucchini, is the solution to the death of the family farm. No federal agency has stepped in and offered free advice or tax money; the agripreneurs are doing the thinking and planning and customer development on their own. More important, each of these enterprising souls continues to tailor his product to fit his market . . . be it in Maine or Missouri or Podunk. ◇

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Those Deadly, Depressing, Syncopated Semiautomatic Assault Rifle Blues

An Exercise in Calculated Hysteria

by Wayne R. Austerman

The semiautomatic rifle has been part of the American scene for nearly a century. In 1903 the Winchester Repeating Arms Company marketed the first commercially successful semiautomatic rifle. It was not designed as a military arm, and no sales were made to the US Army. The new rifle was marketed among sportsmen and touted as a great technical improvement over the lever- and bolt-action weapons that had dominated hunting since the post-Civil War period. Only in 1939 did the United States Army begin large-scale issue of a recently adopted semiautomatic rifle (the famous M-1 Garand), and it was not until the mid-1960's that the American military adopted a selective-fire "assault rifle" (the initially problem-plagued M-16) as its new standard small arm.

Eighty-six years after the first Winchester semiautomatic rifle left the factory and entered a private citizen's hands, the nation has been convulsed by a wave of controversy and deliberately induced hysteria over the alleged menace of the privately-owned "semiautomatic assault rifle." The result has been massive confusion on the part of the nonshooting public, generated in large measure by the ignorance, incompetence, and poorly concealed bias of a national news media working in concert with an alliance of social activists whose ultimate goal is to deny the private citizen any right to own firearms of any description. No one should oppose the free discussion and debate of the potential need for reforms in our gun laws, but lies and willful distortions of the truth employed in the service of a hidden agenda have no legitimate part in such a process. There exists a definite need for someone to dispel some of the prevalent myths about semiautomatic firearms and the uses to which they are put by the people who own them, the overwhelming majority of whom are law-abiding citizens.

What is a semiautomatic rifle? What is an assault rifle? Those two terms are bandied about as synonymous by the news media and anti-gun activists, but their specific meanings elude most of the people who use them so glibly to condemn an entire class of firearms. Simply put, a semiautomatic weapon (handgun or longarm) is one that possesses the capability to fire single shots in quick succession by using the force generated by the explosion of each cartridge in its chamber to set up the next shot. Early repeating rifles utilizing lever- and bolt-action systems required the shooter to manually manipulate a mechanical loading and firing system for each shot. A semiautomatic weapon requires the shooter only to load a quantity of cartridges into its magazine before firing and then to squeeze the trigger for each successive shot. Semiautomatic weapons can be

Wayne R. Austerman writes from Colorado Springs.

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fired very rapidly, but they are not fully automatic, like the machine gun. They do not fire continuously for as long as the trigger is held back or cartridges remain in the magazine.

An assault rifle is a member of a class of weapons first developed for military use by the Germans in World War II. Assault rifles are capable of selective fire—i.e., they can be fired in both semi- and fully-automatic modes as the situation confronting the soldier demands. Assault rifles typically take intermediate-size cartridges that are shorter in length and lack the range and striking power found in the full-size cartridges used in most conventional bolt-action and semiautomatic rifles. The so-called "assault rifles" marketed in this country by both domestic and foreign manufacturers do not have the built-in capability to produce fully-automatic fire. In this they differ from their military-production counterparts. Although most semiautomatic weapons of any type can be altered to be permanently fully automatic, such procedures are strictly illegal. In reality the various "assault rifles" being sold in this country are not assault rifles, for they lack a selective-fire capability. Weapons like the improved AK-47's are simply semiautomatic rifles chambering the same intermediate-size cartridges used by their military cousins. Likewise, the American Colt AR-15 rifle is very much like the M-16, except that the Colt lacks the machine gun-like capability to spray bullets at a single touch of the trigger.

At the end of World War II semiautomatic rifles like the M-1 Garand became readily available in large numbers to the American public via sales by surplus arms dealers. Fully automatic weapons like machine guns and submachine guns (which fire pistol cartridges) were not easily acquired by private citizens, for since the 1930's such firearms had been subjected to severe licensing and registration requirements that made them expensive and unattractive for the casual shooter or arms collector. The semiautos remained in common possession, however, and few authorities at any level of state or national law enforcement questioned their suitability for private ownership by nonfelons.

By the mid-1960's attitudes had begun to change. Gun control became a major issue and advocates of more restrictive laws governing the acquisition and use of firearms gained support from the public backlash against the Kennedy and King assassinations as well as such tragedies as the 1966 "Texas Tower" shooting spree staged by the brain tumor-maddened Charles Whitman in Austin. The growing revulsion against the war in Vietnam and the taint of all things martial also aided the anti-gun forces. At the same time a rising tide of social permissiveness and a legal system obsessed with observing procedural minutiae at the expense of dispensing justice contributed to a steady rise in violent crime across the nation. (Remember when Attorney General Katzenbach declared that he regarded the person who left his ignition keys in a car to be just as guilty of a crime as the worthy who stole the same vehicle?)

Despite their best efforts the hoplophobes failed to win passage of their desired restrictive and/or confiscatory gun legislation by the time the 1980's opened. They were frustrated by a crime-weary public that remained skeptical of their aims and methods, as well as a national leader who cheerfully defended the rights of honest gun-owners while he lay recuperating from an attempt on his own life. Even the shooting and killing of a pop icon like John Lennon failed to muster new legions of supporters behind the standards of the gun-haters. By the time poor Bernie Goetz chose to defy the prevailing liberal orthodoxy by defending himself with a handgun on a New York City subway, many citizens were willing to stand up and cheer his courage.

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Many Americans love firearms for the same reason that they love automobiles. Both are perceived as guarantors of individual freedom.

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In the latter half of the 80's the anti-gun crowd has had better luck gaining adherents. The "McDonald's Massacre" in California and the string of mass shootings that followed between April 1987 and February 1989 triggered a new wave of public concern about firearms. The January 17, 1989, attack upon a California grade school by an AK-47-wielding psychotic left five children dead and 30 other people wounded in a horrifying act of madness. It also served as the rallying point for an attack upon the ownership of semiautomatic weapons. Patrick Purdy, the suicide-bent assailant in the California killings, was armed with a "street-legal" imported semiautomatic AK-47, as well as a semiautomatic pistol. That much was indisputable. Conveniently suppressed or overlooked in the media stories were the facts of Purdy's lengthy criminal record, which included arrests for extortion, prostitution, possession of narcotics, attempted robbery, receipt of stolen property, criminal conspiracy, and two dangerous-weapons charges. This was a man who had once been arrested for shooting at trees because, he explained, "I have a duty to overthrow the suppressor." He was subsequently described in his probation officer's report as "a danger to himself and others." Patrick Purdy was cast by the media as a symbol of the tragic laxity of gun laws in America. He was in reality a symbol of the tragic laxity of the criminal justice system, which left him free to walk the streets.

The system of plea bargaining and the apparent indifference of the California legal and public health authorities to Purdy's obviously deranged state put him swiftly back in society following each arrest and left him free to legally purchase firearms. (Purdy's reputed purchase of the AK-47 from an Oregon dealer may have been in violation of the law, although the exact circumstances concerning his acquisition are not yet clear.)

The Purdy killings prompted a spate of municipal bans against the sale of "assault rifles" in California, and a bill was introduced in the state legislature to outlaw numerous semiautomatic firearms. Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio also announced his sponsorship of a federal bill that would place semiautomatic arms in the same legal restrictive category as machine guns and submachine guns.

Obviously there is something wrong with a system that

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permits the Patrick Purdys of this world to run free and gain access to any sort of weapon. But does the solution to preventing such acts as his lie in outlawing a specific type of firearm and casting ridicule or suspicion upon those who wish to own them? Is the mounting incidence of violence in our society mainly attributable to the presence of semiautomatic weapons, or do other factors encourage the predisposition of certain people to violent crime? Sociologists have debated these issues for decades, without resolution.

Certain facts are quantifiable and demonstrable, however, and once demonstrated they bring the supposedly criminal and sinister qualities of semiautomatic firearms into clearer perspective. Gun-banners seem incapable (or unwilling) to make any clear distinctions between the legal semiautos like Uzis and AK-47's on the one hand, and genuine "assault rifles" on the other. They further cloud the issue by lumping *all* semiautomatic weapons into the "purely weapons of war" category. The March 15, 1989, US Commerce Department ban on the importation of "AK-47 type weapons" is a case in point. What precisely is the government's interpretation of the phrase "AK-47 type weapons"? Does it refer to all gas-operated semiautomatic rifles (*à la* the American M-1, Belgian FN, and Chinese SKS, among a host of others)? What about those semiautos operating on the blowback principle, like the imported Israeli Uzi carbine? Does the ban cover only those semiautomatic rifles utilizing intermediate-power rifle cartridges like the AK-47? What about (again) the popular Uzi, which chambers nine millimeter pistol ammunition?

Although police departments in certain areas where there is heavy drug traffic have testified to the rising criminal use of semiautomatics, just how wide a threat to society does the illicit possession and use of such weapons pose? University of Texas criminologist Sheldon Ekland-Olson recently estimated that "assault rifle" type firearms figured in less than 1 percent of all homicides committed in the United States, while the cheap "Saturday Night Special" handguns favored by many petty criminals were used in between 30 and 40 percent of such killings.

Leaving aside the actual frequency of their criminal usage, such vaunted and allegedly sinister weapons as the semiautomatic AK-47 and Uzi are in some respects no more lethally effective than such conventional and "low-tech" weapons as the shotgun. The AK will assuredly empty its thirty-round magazine of cartridges within 20 seconds if the shooter has a limber trigger finger and scant regard for the precise placement of his shots. By contrast, a Remington Model 1100 semiautomatic shotgun fitted with a five-round magazine for twelve-gauge cartridges can be fired empty within five seconds or less. A shotgunner using a plastic cartridge-holding tube to speed reloading can easily keep pace with an AK gunner in laying down a curtain of fire. Even an elderly double-barreled shotgun charged with buckshot loads can dispense 18 projectiles in under two seconds and be ready to fire again within five seconds. Compared to such weapons the AK's only advantages are its superior range and accuracy if used in firing slow, aimed shots. A recent comparison test has even disclosed that in terms of accuracy and striking power the venerable Model 1894 Winchester lever-action deer rifle with its .30-30 cartridge is superior to the AK-47. (The Model 1894 Winchester was the gun used by actor Chuck Connors in *The Rifleman*.)

LIBERAL ARTS

YES, MR. SCHLESINGER, THE COLD WAR'S OVER

The cold war between the towns of Fraser, Colorado, and International Falls, Minnesota, has finally come to an end.

Here the war was waged not between competing political and economic systems, but between competing town sobriquets: both towns claimed exclusive rights to the title "Icebox of the Nation." It seems that both towns adopted the title in the 1950's, and that the conflicting claims simply went unnoticed until about two years ago, when each town made a mad rush to the US Patent and Trademark Office for a federal copyright to the title.

Not surprisingly, both towns argued that statistics proved their frigid claims. Fraser, situated about 70 miles west of Denver, appears to have the colder year-round average temperature, due principally to its 8,500-foot elevation. As Fraser Town Manager Clay Brown said, "They have quite nice summers in International Falls, but we get below freezing here in summer." The mayor of International Falls wasn't impressed. "No one cares about the summer," he shot back, "we're talking about cold, frigid weather." He then cited his town's average daily *winter* temperature, which is 5.2 degrees as compared with Fraser's 13.4. Coldness, however, figured to have little to do with the matter, since the US Patent Office said it was interested mainly in which town *first* used the title.

The town that had the most to lose in this tiff over titles was International Falls, which had long marketed itself nationally as a cold weather test site. General Motors, Ford, Subaru, Sears, and many other companies have long tested their products in International Falls (which is located on the Canadian border), and the state of Minnesota is considering a plan to establish a Cold Weather Research Center in the town to market the state's expertise in this field. As the mayor of International Falls said, "We want to say 'Tested in the Icebox of the Nation' and have it be like a Good Housekeeping seal of approval."

A truce between the towns was reached in August, bringing the cold war to an amiable end. As Martin Moylan reported from St. Paul, Fraser agreed to use the title *only* in Colorado and to drop its efforts to secure a copyright if International Falls would reimburse the town for the $2,000 it expended in legal fees. Realizing the devastating effect that the loss of the title could have on International Falls, Fraser's Clay Brown honorably conceded that "cold-weather testing is more important to their economy than it is to ours. We feel we have plenty of other assets." "This is a very warm ending to a cold war," said the mayor of International Falls. (TP)

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The Trellis

by Charles Edward Eaton

So there I was lying in my breechcloth
While the scented trade winds blew over me,
Stripped clean of angst by a swim in the sea,
My skin air-brushed with the gold of the sun—
Somewhere, far off, the image abattoir
As I stretched out dreaming with open hands,
No hammer, no cleaver, no dripping club,
Blood in the eyes transferred to hibiscus—
One learns these extrapolations early,
The use of the salve and the saving grace,
The flinging oneself down at the day's end,
Calling amorini from the smogged air,
A woman's perfume floating a garden—
Done before, so we can do it again.
It is as though you harbor an ideal man
Who always waits like a non-paying guest.
Give him a bed by the sea to flourish,
A sunset suit in the rich evening light.
Still one is struck with the fact that he is
Put down—a glancing blow of the hammer?—
The optic nerves in the thread of a flower,
In the soft hand, the ghost of a handle?—
He wants to pay his keep with your content,
Offering his chest to your late mistress,
Suggesting balneologies of blue,
How the demulcent trade winds treat the lips,
The *aequo animo* of his undress.
He is a trellis of the treasured life.
But one cannot quite get over the fact
That he is fallen, that some blow did tell,
His heart ravished with its own red roses,
The lattice of last resort, espaliered nerves.
One rests and rests—at last, supine success.
Whether it was wind, will, or wayward love,
You were pushed over in a pose—I come
Along the beach, stuffed with this fantasy:
No wonder it fell, no wonder it fell!—
Unless we finger forays one at a time,
Feeling the nerve faint in the golden man,
The cravings that cram from the crosspieces,
Even the lying down is too lonesome—
Who can say the tyrant of the trellis
Does not plan, pitch, a tower in the sand?

Given such indisputable technical realities, why do the anti-gun activists have such a zealous hatred for paramilitary-style semiautomatic rifles? It is a matter of popular psychology. Such weapons have a lean, functional look of lethal efficiency that gives them a sinister aspect. Such an appearance plays right into the hands of the hoplophobes. "The weapons' menacing looks, coupled with the public's confusion over fully automatic machine guns versus semiautomatic assault weapons—anything that looks like a machine gun is assumed to be a machine gun—can only increase the chance of public support for restrictions on these weapons," boasts a recent publication by the Educational Fund to End Handgun Violence.

The anti-gunners and their media allies have no desire to confuse the public with facts. The anti-gun, anti-Second Amendment message is pervasive in both mass-media entertainment and journalism. During the week of March 13-17, 1989, the CBS television network provided repeated grist for the gun-banners' mill. The popular Monday night situation comedy *Designing Women* featured a distortion of fact that could only have stemmed from either blatant ignorance or a willful intent to deceive on the part of writer-producer Linda Bloodworth Thompson. In this episode one of the ditzy female characters on the show legally purchased a Colt AR-15 rifle following a series of threats against her and her pet pig. When her friends from work made a surprise midnight call upon her, the nervous Atlanta belle opened up with what was obviously a barrage of *fully-automatic* fire. Actress Dixie Carter then self-righteously delivered a homily on the evils of such weapons and the malign "gun lobby."

CBS followed this with its evening newscast of March 15. Commentator Dan Rather announced the news of the government ban on importation of "AK-47 type weapons" and then held forth in a prerecorded segment in which he appeared at a police gun range somewhere in New Jersey to interview two alleged experts on the evils of such weapons. The demonstrated expertise of the first "expert" whom Rather interviewed was less than impressive. The government agent proceeded to display an Uzi whose barrel length was plainly below the legally mandated minimum for the semiautomatic versions of the weapon imported into this country from Israel. The audience, of course, was led to believe that they were seeing a weapon that was already in common circulation among the citizenry. He then referred to it as a "rifle," and identified its detachable magazine as a "clip." These were mistakes in technical nomenclature that no truly knowledgeable person would have made. Another law enforcement officer featured in the broadcast referred to those who might wish to use semiautomatic weapons for hunting purposes as "weird." So much for the ethical and objective standards of broadcast journalism.

The Rather broadcast touched upon another distorted issue that constantly surfaces in the debate over semiautomatic arms. Opponents claim that no genuine sportsman would seek to blast Bambi with a thirty-round barrage from a weapon like the AK-47. This ignores the fact that such weapons are legal for hunting purposes in 48 of the 50 states, although in many instances semiautomatics must have their magazines blocked so that they will accept no more than five rounds of ammunition, which is the same

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number of cartridges carried in most bolt-action sporting rifles. Once again, the opposition ignores reality in its drive to "prove" that semiautomatics are not suitable for sporting purposes and serve only the function of killing people.

If the banners truly want to eliminate all guns capable of rapid-fire or the discharge of multiple projectiles in quick succession, then they will ultimately have to move against all revolvers, all shotguns, and all lever- and bolt-action magazine-fed rifles. (In 1914 advancing German troops were decimated by smaller units of British Tommies armed with a bolt-action rifle whose basic design dated back to the late 1880's. Trained in rapid and accurate delivery of long-range fire, the British troops proved so effective that the Germans complained that each enemy soldier must have been armed with a machine gun.) The end result of this campaign for public safety would likely be the prohibition of all firearms except muzzleloaders and single-shot breech-loading hand and shoulder guns. A ban on all metallic cartridge fixed ammunition might logically follow, since elimination of it would render inoperable any illicit semiautomatic weapons still retained by the rightwing-redneck-diehard element of the population.

At its core the crusade against semiautomatic rifles (and by implication all other firearms) reflects a deep split in values between those who honor the traditional warrior virtues and skills as vital necessities for a nation's survival and those who deplore them as being proof of a willing reversion to the bestial. Many Americans love firearms for the same reason that they love automobiles. Both are perceived as guarantors of individual freedom. Both can impart a sense of power to their possessors which serves as a healthy tonic against the myriad petty oppressions of life in a modern mass society. They instinctively know that to be disarmed is to risk subjection to the worst excesses that can be wreaked upon men by the state. They cherish skill with arms for both the intrinsic joy that stems from mastering a powerful instrument and for the assurance it brings that they can still give pause to all Hitlers and Stalins (foreign or domestic). The gun-haters cannot fathom such a people and their feelings. "Our female-dominated, spastic society has been working overtime for a generation to discredit manhood," Bill R. Davidson asserted in *To Keep and Bear Arms*. "People who still like to kill their own snakes bother political leaders in our time. The politicians don't understand and thus vaguely distrust these last traces of self-reliance and do-it-yourself assuredness."

The anti-gun lobby will never realize that an Alvin York will always be more vitally important to the survival of the race than a Dan Rather. For that reason they must not be allowed to prevail, for the triumph of their views will eventually deprive this nation of the essential ability to define its mortal enemies and to unite in arms and oppose them.

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Pire qu'un Crime . . .

by Arnold Beichman

"Arts, Culture, Reverence, Honour, all things fade,
Save Treason and the dagger of her trade . . ."
—Oscar Wilde, "Libertatis Sacra Fames"

Territory of Lies: The Exclusive Story of Jonathan Jay Pollard, The American Who Spied on His Country for Israel and How He Was Betrayed
by Wolf Blitzer
New York: Harper & Row;
336 pp., $22.50

The Pollard treason case is so unusual that I want to start my review of this book with a review of the reviews. I do this because the first-hand story by the Washington correspondent of *The Jerusalem Post* and the book's equivocal subtitle attracted some exceedingly well-informed people as book-reviewers—George A. Carver Jr., Walter Laqueur, Joseph Sobran, and Stephen Green. (Green's two articles covered a full page of *The Christian Science Monitor*.) What they have to say about the book is worth reporting. I will save my own opinions and analysis for last.

First, the facts in the case, all of which were admitted in Federal Court by Pollard and his wife in their guilty plea made on March 4, 1987. (He is serving a life sentence and his wife, five years.) Pollard became a junior US Navy intelligence analyst in 1979. His earlier job application had been turned down by the CIA. In 1984 he was assigned to the Threat Analysis Division of the Naval Investigative Service's Anti-Terrorist Alert Center. That appointment gave him access to classified materials, including satellite photos and top secret communications intelligence. For 18 months, Pollard, known in the trade as a "walk-in" (that is, a volunteer spy), presented his Israeli handlers with 360 cubic feet of documents, or 850,000 pages. Over half of the documents were classified as "Top Secret" or higher. As Blitzer puts it, "Pollard made virtually the entire U.S. intelligence-gathering apparatus available to Israel."

The Pollards were arrested in November 1985 outside the Israeli embassy in Washington to which, with the FBI in hot pursuit, they had fled for asylum, and from which the embassy chased them away. That is the betrayal the book's subtitle refers to: Pollard's Israeli handlers hadn't planned his escape in case of detection. Presently, there is a Justice for the Pollards movement in New York and a Citizens for Pollard committee in Israel. Professor Alan Dershowitz, the Harvard law professor who is the Pollards' attorney, wants the life sentence overturned. Now to the reviews.

Carver, a former CIA executive, is a John M. Olin senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. His review ran in the May 15 *Washington Times*. Carver praises the author for his "unflinching intellectual honesty" because "Mr. Blitzer never lets his personal judgments skew his evidence." While Blitzer is "reluctant" to pass such a judgment, Carver concludes that the Pollard operation was "explicitly authorized by the Israeli government's topmost levels"—i.e., from Prime Minister Shamir on down—although the Israeli government has always insisted that this was an "unsanctioned" rogue operation of which it knew nothing. (Former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg sniffed at the "rogue" alibi, in view of the fact that Pollard's handlers were promoted after the scandal broke.) Carver also says that Blitzer "surfaces" but does not explore some intriguing possible connections between the Pollard case and the Iran-Contra affair.

Carver is persuaded that there must be—or must have been—another Israeli spy within the US intelligence community, since Pollard was "frequently told exactly which sensitive documents to look for, identified by the title, code-word classification and even, on occasion, document num-

Arnold Beichman, a Washington Times *columnist, is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. He has just completed a book on Soviet treaty diplomacy.*

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ber," details no outsider could have known. Carver argues that the House and Senate Intelligence Oversight Committees ought to ask the FBI or other members of the counterintelligence community to testify "on the history of Israeli espionage against the United States." The aim of such a congressional investigation, says Carver, would be "not to harm the American-Israeli alliance but to strengthen it." Stephen Green has prepared a chronology, "Israel's 40-Year History of Espionage Against the United States," which lists hitherto unpublicized cases of such spying.

Laqueur's review, which ran in the June 5 *New Republic*, begins with a dramatic (at least to me) revelation. In 1956, a member of the Polish Politburo, Stefan Staszewski, handed over the text of Khrushchev's sensational anti-Stalin speech (now *that* was a piece of real *glasnost*!) to an Israeli journalist, Philip Ben, a correspondent for *Le Monde* and *Ma'ariv*. In turn, Ben passed on the speech to what Laqueur says was "an Israeli connection," who then conveyed it to James Angleton, head of the CIA's counterintelligence operation, who gave it to Allen Dulles, who gave it to *The New York Times*. Thus began, says Laqueur, himself author of a book on US intelligence, A *World of Secrets*, "a long period of cooperation between the American and the Israeli intelligence services." Such cooperation, says Laqueur, is "the rule between friendly nations . . . At the same time, such cooperation has always been less than total."

Laqueur argues that Pollard was not an "evil man" because he did not engage in espionage, as Kim Philby did, to harm his country and to aid its enemies. Pollard was, however, "disloyal, he lied constantly, and he was incredibly stupid." (Laqueur's argument here is weak, since Pollard may indeed have harmed, however unwittingly, the US. Israeli intelligence, after all, is also vulnerable to penetration. In fact, two Israeli KGB agents are now in jail.) Like Carver, Laqueur believes that the authorization for hiring Pollard must have come from higher up. "It would be interesting to know what this person (or these people) thought when he (or they) gave the green light to an operation that was bound to end in disaster sooner or later." The "worst case" question not apparently raised by top Israeli decision-makers was this: what would be the costs to the special relationship between the United States and Israel were the operation exposed? The Pollard case, Laqueur writes, is "a prime example of an intelligence coup turned failure precisely because the question was ignored."

What was "scandalous" about the Pollard affair, says Laqueur, was "the ease with which Pollard collected documents that he had no business seeing." In light of other penetrations, it would appear that the US intelligence community "has become infinitely more vulnerable than ever before." The time has come, he insists, to ask "searching questions—not about deterrent sentences for culprits like Pollard, but about the general value of our present-day intelligence operations." I would add a demurrer to that sweeping indictment. Laqueur seems to have forgotten the Church-Pike investigations of the CIA and what those probes did to counterintelligence, as well as their aftermath, the leaks and exposés, and Philip Agee's treason. (It's startling to think that someone like Agee, who publicized names of CIA agents and exposed them thereby to infinite peril, walks the streets free, lectures for money, and travels the world over continuing to expose US intelligence, while Pollard is in the slammer for life.)

Joseph Sobran, a controversial editor and columnist, compares Pollard to Colonel Oliver North (*National Review*, June 16). Like North, Pollard "felt frustrated that this country was apparently 'unwilling to defend its own interests,' and he feared Israel would pay the consequences." Pollard considered Caspar Weinberger an enemy of Israel and a friend to the Arabs. It was the then-defense secretary's still classified 46-page memorandum to the court regarding the damage Pollard's actions had done American security that was crucial in Judge Aubrey Robinson's decision to sentence Pollard to life. Yet, as Sobran points out, the US-Israeli relationship "peaked during the Reagan years." Pollard, says Sobran, took refuge "in a Jewish racial mystique."

Worst of all was the Israeli government's behavior, says Sobran. Having pledged to cooperate with the US to undo the damage, the Israelis "then lied, stonewalled, and evaded. They displayed contempt for the sensitivities of American Jews and for their American benefactors in general." That behavior must have been the reason why the Washington lawyer Leonard Garment, whose services were sought by the Israeli government during the Pollard crisis, removed himself from the case. According to Blitzer, Garment concluded after a few weeks "that Israel had no intention of fully cooperating with the United States."

The most important article is Stephen Green's, published in the May 22 *Christian Science Monitor*, titled "Damage Caused by 'Friendly' Spies." A lot of Green's information, he says, came from documents released under the Freedom of Information Act and from interviews with current FBI counterintelligence agents, or with retired FBI and Justice Department officials.

Green is critical of the Blitzer book because it "allows Jonathan Pollard to pick apart selected portions of the US government's case while ignoring or misrepresenting other portions." Interestingly, Green discounts the possibility of another spy. Early in his espionage, Pollard supplied a compendium of current classified military documents that is updated every three months. This lists and describes tens of thousands of documents, "a virtual road map for Pollard's handlers. No need for Mr. X." So when Israeli intelligence asked for certain documents, they knew exactly what they wanted because of the compendium. But what was it they wanted? Green says that many of the documents sought "had nothing to do with the Middle East at all."

The purloined documents contained, according to Green, details of US and Soviet intelligence, communication and military capabilities, details about US naval positions, aircraft stations, tactics, and training operations. "Much of this material," writes Green, "could have been of interest to only one country—the Soviet Union." Green says that during the Pollard investigation, an (unnamed) Soviet defector in US custody revealed that in addition to the two Soviet spies serving prison terms in Israel, "there was a

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third who had not been caught. He was well placed in the Defense Ministry, and still 'active.'" Former CIA Director Richard Helms was recently asked —in connection with the Pollard affair, says Green—whether the US government should distinguish between those who sell secrets to "friends" or to "enemies." Helms said no, "for the simple reason that we don't know about the security of those other governments." (So much for what Blitzer calls "friendly espionage.")

Now, as someone who has written extensively about espionage and is fairly well versed in the literature, as well as being a founding member of the academic Consortium for the Study of Intelligence, what do I think? What questions has Blitzer's book raised in my mind?

1. Pollard was traveling around Europe, staying at luxurious hotels, eating at three-star restaurants, buying jewelry, flaunting his credit card, and in general living far beyond his means. In Washington, too, he and his wife lived lavishly. Is this normal behavior for the average US intelligence employee? Is it the expected thing for an intelligence employee to walk out three times a week with "suitcases" of stolen classified documents and to deliver them to a "safe house" for copying? Pollard was supposed to be studying the possibilities of terrorism in the Caribbean, not in the Middle East. I suppose one could argue that Pollard's "need to know" gave him the right to ask for documents on Soviet weapons systems and the military capabilities of Arab countries. Nevertheless, the question remains: what was the US counterintelligence system doing throughout all of this?

2. Pollard says he was pressured to take $2,500 a month for his treasonable employment. Living as he did in a free country, he could have refused the money. Even taking it, Pollard might have stashed away these sums unused. But not only did he receive and spend the money, he accepted an Israeli offer of a Swiss bank account for future bonuses. And now that he sits in jail Israel has doubled his monthly salary, presumably to make a nice nest egg for him when he gets out.

3. Blitzer says that Pollard took the money because "it could be useful in getting secret documents." What does that throwaway line mean? Was there someone else that Pollard felt could be suborned to treason?

4. Blitzer says that even though, upon his arrest, Pollard was ordered held without bail, a professional bondsman showed up trying to get him out on bail. Who was the bondsman, who hired him—what's all that about? Blitzer doesn't speculate.

5. It is meaningless to say, as Blitzer does several times, that the Israeli government "has returned to the United States all such documents in its possession or under its control." Don't the Israelis have copying machines?

6. Since a good deal of money was changing hands, it is difficult to believe that Pollard's was a rogue operation. Does Blitzer mean to suggest that anybody can walk into the Israeli treasury, sign a chit, and walk out with several thousand dollars?

7. Blitzer makes a statement that I find particularly indecent: "I felt that American Jewry was partially responsible for having created Pollard." If Joe Sobran had written that, I'd be jumping up and down with indignation. Perhaps Blitzer will one day tell us how he apportions the responsibility.

8. This so-called lover of Israel also took secret documents and distributed them to his social acquaintances and to professional investment advisers, presumably to help them in their business ventures. Pollard did this, according to Blitzer, in the hope of someday returning to a career in private life.

9. I think Israel deliberately "betrayed" Pollard because it had no alternative to doing so. Had Pollard been spirited out of the country to Israel, and had the US government demanded his extradition, could Israel have refused to hand Pollard over?

There are many morals to be drawn from the Pollard affair, but the most important of them is this:

The reason for the American-Israeli "special relationship" is that both countries are democracies, both countries share common values. A large sector of the American people, not merely Jews, have an affection for Israel. It is the land of the Old Testament. There is a sense of trust between both peoples, and presumably between the two governments. This trust, supported by American public opinion, has given Israel a unique status in American foreign policy and, indeed, even in American domestic policy.

That trust has been badly damaged, as Blitzer concedes and as statements from leading Jewish organizations and their spokesmen confirm. Is the damage irreparable? Those of us who value this single outpost of freedom and democracy in a hostile region can only hope that this tawdry episode will be overcome. Why seemingly intelligent survivors like Shamir, Peres, and other Israeli policymakers allowed it to occur in the first place and, having done so, permitted it to continue as long as it did, remains a mystery.

In the Talmud, when certain questions, after long debate among the sages, were found to be inexplicable, the debate ended with "tayku." This is a Hebrew acronym—*Tishbi yetares kushiot vbeayot*—meaning that on Elijah of Tishbi's return to earth all these questions will be answered, and that until Elijah's return there is no good explanation as to why highly intelligent people often do stupid things.

Jeffrey Hart

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Beyond All This

by Robert B. Shaw

". . . the wish to be alone."
—"Wants"

Collected Poems
by Philip Larkin
edited by Anthony Thwaite
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux;
330 pp., $22.50

◆

Philip Larkin, who died in 1985 at the age of 63, has been commonly regarded as the finest English poet of his time. His reputation is founded not merely on the opinion of professional critics but on his remarkable popularity with readers, including many who rarely look at poetry. As I begin writing this review, I notice that Larkin's *Collected Poems* is a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, which is decidedly unusual for a book of verse. Anyone attempting to gauge Larkin's achievement must ponder the reasons for his nearly unique popular appeal.

It might be easier to explain if he had engaged in the sort of self-promotion that many poets now accept as a natural adjunct to their calling. In fact, Larkin's poems, once written, had to make their way with very little help from him. He did not give readings, and only rarely agreed to be interviewed. He did not cultivate disciples by teaching at universities on short-term high-paid appointments. Although he did his share of book reviewing, he almost never wrote about contemporary poetry; while maintaining lifelong friendships with a few writers such as Kingsley Amis, Larkin distanced himself from the English literary establishment and its policies and perquisites.

The distance was geographical as well as emotional. Literary activity in Britain remains centered in London; Larkin, for most of his life, remained centered in the Humberside city of Hull, where he spent his days as head librarian at the university. He liked Hull, he once said, "because it's so far away from everywhere else." In this isolation he produced the poems that made him famous; and he produced them very sparingly. In this, too, he showed himself indifferent to the obvious ways of advancing a literary career: frequent appearance in print is certainly one of these. After his first book, *The North Ship* (1945), which he virtually disowned as juvenilia, Larkin published only three slim volumes during his lifetime. Appearing about once a decade, together they contain 85 poems—a body of work remarkably small in proportion to the reputation it engendered. Clearly something, or several things, in this writing struck a powerful chord in those who read it. What could it—or they—have been?

Several explanations come to mind, all no doubt valid up to a point. One thing that strikes me immediately when reading Larkin's mature work is its profound descriptive fidelity. His youthful ambition was to be a novelist, and he published two novels in his

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20's. Although he was never able to complete a third, he managed to bring to his poetry the novelist's gift for creating a palpable, recognizable world through scrupulous rendering of the look and feel of things. Often his poems present themselves as *scenes*. Through his eyes we see, for instance, the center of Hull, where:

> . . . residents from raw estates,
> brought down
> The dead straight miles by
> stealing flat-faced trolleys,
> Push through plate-glass swing
> doors to their desires—
> Cheap suits, red kitchen-ware,
> sharp shoes, iced lollies,
> Electric mixers, toasters,
> washers, driers . . .
> ("Here")

Or we are shown the summer wedding parties, "grinning and pomaded," waving newly married couples off at railroad stations:

> The fathers with broad belts
> under their suits
> And seamy foreheads, mothers
> loud and fat;
> An uncle shouting smut; and
> then the perms,
> The nylon gloves and
> jewelry-substitutes . . .
> ("The Whitsun Weddings")

Many of the settings are less animated, but just as memorable. There is the empty country church where the agnostic tourist, at a loss, makes a kind of inventory:

> Another church: matting, seats,
> and stone,
> And little books; sprawlings
> of flowers, cut
> For Sunday, brownish now;
> some brass and stuff
> Up at the holy end; the small,
> neat organ;
> And a tense, musty, unignorable
> silence,
> Brewed God knows how long.
> ("Church Going")

And there is a near-deserted provincial hotel, in which the loneliness is grimmer:

> Through open doors, the dining
> room declares
> A larger loneliness of
> knives and glass
> And silence laid like carpet.
> A porter reads
> An unsold evening paper.
> Hours pass,
> And all the salesmen have gone
> back to Leeds,
> Leaving full ashtrays in the
> Conference Room.
> ("Friday Night in the Royal
> Station Hotel")

For his English readers Larkin captured such scenes in all their bustling or sad familiarity; for American readers unfamiliar with the ambience the writing nevertheless has the documentary clarity of photography. Although his concerns in writing were not primarily social ones, Larkin's poetry offers a series of vignettes that coalesce in a compelling portrait of postwar England. The years of digging out from the Blitz, the shabbiness of economic austerity, the disillusionment attendant on the loss of empire and the bureaucratic sprawl of the welfare state—all these are implicit, giving depth to his descriptions. Surely one of his claims upon his public has been his ability to mirror so accurately the times and places they and he knew so well.

All that being said, Larkin's writing is most intense when it addresses his personal preoccupations. In a queer way it seems right to call him a confessional poet, although the term was not generally applied to him in his lifetime. Confessional poetry is in most people's minds linked with such poets as Lowell, Berryman, and Plath, who offer ostensibly unvarnished accounts of nervous breakdowns, alcoholism, adulteries, suicide attempts, and the like. Granted, Larkin has nothing so dramatic to reveal about himself. But if confessionalism means laying one's own flaws, disaffections, or malaise open to view, this is precisely what he did, in poem after poem, and he did so without indulging in the heroic postures favored by the poets mentioned above. The persona in his work is not a doomed genius but an ordinary man with troubles so ordinary that they have rarely before figured largely as poetic subjects. Solitude, partly willed, partly accidental, is one of his most problematic topics. Many pieces are framed as arguments with himself about his decision to remain single in a society that revolves around marriage. Peering through a window at couples strenuously enjoying themselves at a dance, he is estranged in outlook as someone from another planet:

> Why be out here?
> But then, why be in there?
> Sex, yes, but what
> Is sex? Surely, to think the
> lion's share
> Of happiness is found by
> couples—sheer
>
> Inaccuracy, as far as I'm
> concerned.
> ("Reasons for Attendance")

A stanza from the little poem "Wants" states the position with startling bluntness:

> Beyond all this, the wish to be
> alone:
> However the sky grows dark
> with invitation-cards
> However we follow the printed
> directions of sex
> However the family is
> photographed under the
> flagstaff—
> Beyond all this, the wish to be
> alone.

Other poems disclose, or ironically celebrate, a temperament governed by emotional depletion or timidity—a psychological equivalent, really, of the pinched, exhausted atmosphere of the England in which he came of age. Larkin prides himself on avoiding the "bad habits of expectancy" he sees in so many people, even as he laments his unadventurous willingness to "let the toad *work* / Squat on my life," or notes the relentless passage of time:

> Life is first boredom, then fear.
> Whether or not we use it,
> it goes,
> And leaves what something
> hidden from us chose,
> And age, and then the
> only end of age.
> ("Dockery and Son")

This candor in confronting the occasionless unhappiness that in most people remains submerged and inarticulate is very likely another reason for Larkin's popularity. In a culture numbed by sensationalism the ordinariness of this melancholy arrests attention, and so does the poet's tone: not histrionically tragic, but plainspokenly stoical. His

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bitterness at being odd man out is at times laced with humor, which has endeared him to readers as well:

> Sexual intercourse began
> In nineteen sixty-three
> (Which was rather late
> for me)—
> Between the end of the
> *Chatterley* ban
> And the Beatles' first LP.
> ("Annus Mirabilus")

Finally, of course, Larkin's communicative success with his readers comes down to his self-effacing and yet dazzling skill with words. He is one of the most (some would say one of the few) quotable 20th-century poets. In his mature style one feels that all his wit, intelligence, and feeling are concentrated in lines of aphoristic energy. This is nowhere more true than in the harrowing late pieces that testify to his fears of aging, illness, and death:

> . . . this is what we fear—no
> sight, no sound,
> No touch or taste or smell,
> nothing to think with,
> Nothing to love or link with,
> The anaesthetic from which
> none come round.
> ("Aubade")

Larkin's *Collected Poems* confirms our sense of his stature and offers some surprises as well. It virtually doubles the quantity of Larkin's published poetry, adding 83 poems to those he included in his four volumes. Some of these are juvenilia, and a few are unfinished. But many of them are from Larkin's mature period and are very good indeed. It was always evident that Larkin was an exacting craftsman; it is now apparent that he was a stringent editor, too hard on himself in withholding several of these lyrics from publication. "An April Sunday," an elegiac piece written after his father died, and several characteristic bits of self-portraiture such as "Mother, Summer, I," "The March Past," "The View," and "The Winter Palace" are especially welcome additions to the canon. Even when we can see why Larkin might have rejected certain pieces as too derivative, or as repetitious of things he had done before, they retain great interest for those studying his development as an artist.

Anthony Thwaite's editorial labors have made that study easier. He has arranged the poems chronologically and attached dates of composition to them. This dating, and the appearance or reappearance of many early poems, makes it possible to analyze the fashioning of Larkin's distinctive voice more precisely than ever before. He himself rightly characterized the poems in *The North Ship* as being under the spell of Yeats, and he often credited his discovery of Hardy's poems with leading him to his own manner of speaking. Now, in this edition, we can see the grand, Yeatsian gestures giving way to a knotty, Hardyesque plainness. But we can see the interplay of other influences as well. There is a lot of Auden echoing through the early work—not surprising for an English poet of Larkin's generation—but just a little later on we come upon the booming note of Dylan Thomas. This *is* surprising, since Larkin had suppressed all obvious signs of it after failing in the late 40's to find a publisher for a manuscript collection with a fervid title Thomas would have loved: *In the Grip of Light*.

Before settling down beneath "the toad *work*," we can now see that Larkin went through some colorfully romantic phases that he was ultimately to reject as inauthentic. The wry, disenchanted voice he found for himself was no sudden discovery, and readers will value this collection for the dynamic portrait it offers of a poet's consciousness in formation, of the lonely, difficult emergence of a true self. The last stanza of one of the previously unpublished poems, "Best Society," provides a striking image of the process:

> Viciously, then, I lock my door.
> The gas-fire breathes. The wind
> outside
> Ushers in evening rain. Once
> more
> Uncontradicting solitude
> Supports me on its giant palm;
> And like a sea-anemone
> Or simple snail, there cautiously
> Unfolds, emerges, what I am.

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ON THE VIRTUES OF FARMING

Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who, not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on casualties and caprice of customers. Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition. This, the natural progress and consequence of the arts, has sometimes perhaps been retarded by accidental circumstances; but, generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any State to that of its husbandsmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption.

—*from* Notes on Virginia
by Thomas Jefferson

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A Local Globalist

by J.O. Tate

"But they who shared with me my life's adventure,
Who tossed their ducats like dandelions into the sunlight,
I know that somewhere they with songs are building,
Golden Towers more beautiful than my own."
—"Golden Symphony"

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◆

Here we have a series of books—two more are planned—that restore to view the literary career of John Gould Fletcher (1886-1950), a writer whose work has been heretofore more often cited than read. These handsome books give a new and well-framed access to the lifework of a significant modern man of letters.

Fletcher is today remembered best as a pioneering Imagist poet, one present at the creation, one to be mentioned with T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and H.D., but also one who went his own way, being the disciple of none. It's rather quaint to read in Amy Lowell's *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (1917) that "for the discerning eye, no living poet has more distinction of vision or of style. In [John Gould Fletcher], indeed, we see the beginning of that new order of which I have so often spoken. To the poet, he is a real teacher, indicating new directions, opening up untrodden ways of thought." The new directions and untrodden ways of the revolution of the Image led toward modernist masterpieces like *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, *The Waste Land*, *The Bridge*, *Paterson*, *A*, and other such relics. But they also led toward "Amygism," undergraduate cloning, the disease of "creative writing," the democratization of art, a collapse of standards, and the ruin of poetry.

That's not to say that John Gould Fletcher is to blame for any of the worst of it, of course. He was very much an individual, a man of integrity, more of an old-fashioned gentleman, perhaps, than we'd expect a revolutionary to be. Fletcher lived through the transition from a *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism to its Modernist extension, and he was still writing after World War II. But he was not a great poet, or even—to my tastes—a poet of the first rank. The tenth poem from his *Irradiations: Sand and Spray* (1915) may be representative:

The trees, like great jade
  elephants,
Chained, stamp and shake
  'neath the gadflies of the
  breeze;
The trees lunge and plunge,
  unruly elephants:
The clouds are their crimson
  howdah-canopies,
The sunlight glints like the
  golden robe of a Shah.
Would I were tossed on the
  wrinkled back of those trees.

Is that not a good poem? Yet it is also a decorative and shallow one; its exoticism has not worn well. Perhaps the best thing about it is its sound and *vers libre* swagger.

Lines from the fifth poem of the same series are as well known as any Fletcher wrote:

Whirlpools of purple and gold,
Winds from the mountains of
  cinnabar,

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Lacquered mandarin moments,
palanquins swaying and
balancing
Amid the vermilion pavilions,
against the jade balustrades.
Glint of the glittering wings of
dragon-flies in the light:
Silver filaments, golden flakes
settling downwards,
Rippling, quivering flutters,
repulse and surrender,
The sun broidered upon the
rain,
The rain rustling with the sun.

Here again the too-much-of-a-muchness cloys; and yet the poem is a valuable experiment. I find that many of Fletcher's poems spring to life when read aloud, so that their rhythm can be felt and their vowels sounded. These two lines (from "Green Symphony") make good "poetry in the mouth":

The trees lash the sky with their
leaves,
Uneasily shaking their dark
green manes.

But I must say that I think, too, that passages in his *Autobiography* are better poetry than many of Fletcher's poems. His recollection of pre-War London reflects his broad awareness of "The lights going out in Europe," the losses of the Great War as he knew them both in that city and on the continent:

How remote is that day to us
now! . . . It was the day when
the Derby and Ascot still had a
meaning to all Englishmen as
great social functions; the season
of horse coaches, with
scarlet-clad footmen and coach
horns, running down to the
racecourses; the hour when the
flower stalls of Piccadilly Circus,
now, I believe, banished,
blossomed forth in new and
more incredible colors; the time
when Caruso and Melba sang
nightly at Covent Garden . . .
the moment of the Royal Naval
and Military Display at
Richmond, of the "Trooping of
the Color" in St. James Park, of
the Flower Show at Chelsea
Hospital. The natural stiffness
and correctitude of English
deportment then unbent;
contrasts of wealth and of
squalor were more cunningly
blended; the grimiest and the
dingiest, the most dignified and
the most absurd, the
worst-planned and yet the most
lovable of Europe's great cities,
took on new life and color, as
the great clouds, blown by the
southwest wind past Land's End
and Portland, up the Channel,
were tinged with blue smoke
and the gold of midsummer
sunlight while they soared over
the chimney-potted rooftops.

In other eloquent passages of evocation and memory, Fletcher's rich descriptions of performances of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* and of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* must be among the best responses to those modernist masterpieces. Having himself been thoroughly steeped in the advanced artistic circles of that time, he showed what it meant to be aware of an intellectual revolution while it was happening, just before the War.

What's more, Fletcher's *Autobiography* gives us much of what we look for in a work of that genre—personal revelation as well as intellectual history. His stories of falling in love with the two married women who were to become his wives—the major emotional engagements of his life—are intense and moving accounts, being the fascinating confessions of a lonely soul. Fletcher's celebration of his love for and marriage to Charlie May Simon is sadly undercut, however, by our external knowledge that even such a love could not save him from the mental condition that drove him to suicide.

Because he was often the man who was there in some strategic episodes of literary history, Fletcher's *Autobiography* will always have some readers. But his narrative of his own life deserves many more readers than those who want to go over the ground of old literary wars. Fletcher's own story is an instructive, reflective chronicle of his intellectual quest, his search for beauty and authenticity, and his emotional and spiritual adventures, from Little Rock to London and back. Fletcher became a sophisticated regionalist, a local globalist, a man for whom charity, finally, began at home. After all his

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years as an aesthete and bohemian, he came back to Arkansas:

> I saw no reason, in that spring of 1933, why Arkansas should not achieve a genuine culture of its own, as significant in the pattern of American living as the culture of New England or of New York had been. My hope, however, of the achievement of any very vital and original culture for my native state has now largely waned; but I still see no reason why Arkansas could not some day do it . . . The lack of support, moral and financial, for genuine expression of local and indigenous culture is one of the most flagrantly vicious facts in American life today. How many American authors, artists, intellectuals have made reputations, only by getting away from their own native backgrounds, and by successfully ignoring the small-town disposition to criticize . . . H.L. Mencken had long since singled me out as having achieved a reputation only because I quitted my native state with rejoicings, at the age of twenty-one. I had come back to try to prove him mistaken; but I now found that those people of my native state were generally less interested in the fact that I had come back as an Arkansan, than in the other fact that I had lived for so long in Europe.

One of Fletcher's contributions to his native state and culture was the composition of his history of Arkansas, written in parallel to his personal return and his poetic recreation of that history in the form of an imagistic epic. The prose *Arkansas*, first published in 1947, is a delightful work, an amusing and stirring summation of regional history as seen by a poet who had been both a London socialist and a son of the Confederacy. Stories of duels and political shenanigans, of backwoods humor and violence, and of the place of Arkansas in American history from Hernando de Soto to J. William Fulbright, all enrich Fletcher's colorful narrative. Studded with anecdotes and stiffened with reserve, *Arkansas* has a way of staying in the memory, as when Fletcher, recounting the life of Albert Pike, digresses to describe the state's finest mansion, the Albert Pike house (now a Center for the Decorative Arts)—the house Fletcher himself grew up in!

> When my father first took me, a child of three, to the "old Pike Place," in the late summer of 1889, there were considerably more than five immense oaks on the lawn there, including stumps; and my youthful ingenuity was much taxed to find out which of these magnificent trees, far older than the house itself, were the ones that Pike had named after his five children. The old brick pigeon house, from which the "hundred snowy doves" had emerged "to settle on the grass" in the same poem, was still in existence, though disused; it has long since followed most of the oaks and all of the Pike children into oblivion. Also gone now, though outlasting my own childhood, was the name "Isadore Pike," scratched carefully with a diamond upon the pane of an upstairs window; but the legends of that place are still poignant in my memory.

And he goes on to recite the legends. Fletcher sees Thomas Hindman as a hero, and Prairie Grove as a Confederate victory, in a coherent and generous view of local habitations and names that held me enthralled.

I suppose that *Arkansas* should be classified with other works of Southern regional consciousness; for Fletcher had, after all, contributed an essay on education to the famous Southern symposium, *I'll Take My Stand* (1930). There's a sense in which his history of Arkansas is related to Allen Tate's biographies of Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis, to Robert Penn Warren's books on John Brown and latterly on Davis, and to Donald Davidson's volume on the Tennessee River.

But in superficial contrast to Fletcher's regional and historical focus in his history of Arkansas, the *Selected Essays* show his urbanity, his range, his international consciousness and culture—explorations of Imagism; encounters with the Orient; appreciations of individual writers such as Hardy, Conrad Aiken, and the Fugitives; and essays on art and philosophy. This volume (like the others) commands a respect and admiration for its author, who emerges as an old-fashioned humanist as well as a revolutionary synthesizer. Ever alert to the demands of art and the integrity of cultures, John Gould Fletcher today impresses us with his absence—where is the bohemian gentleman of his style, the man of letters of such honor to be found?

The University of Arkansas Press has surprised me by doing excellently well just exactly what a state university press is supposed to do. Congratulations are also in order to the editor of the series, Lucas Carpenter, for an imposing service to American culture and to modern literary history. ◈

LIBERAL ARTS

THE LURE OF THE COUNTRY

Do you know anywhere better than the country? Is there any place where the winters are milder, where a more pleasant breeze tempers the savage heat of the Dog Star and the mad surge of the lion when it feels the sharpness of the Sun? Is there any place where the intrusive cares of life interrupt our sleep less? Does marble have a better smell or sheen than grass? Is the water which so quickly eats through the lead pipes in the city streets, cleaner than the stream rushing noisily down the mountain? But you admit all this and more by planting trees in your courtyard between your columns of different marbles and by admiring houses which have a view of distant fields. You will drive out Nature with a pitchfork, but She will keep running back without your noticing, and triumphantly breaking through your perverse good taste.

—*from the* Epistles *of Horace*

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Understand Me Completely

by Fred Chappell

Selected One-Act Plays of Horton Foote
Edited by Gerald C. Wood
Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press; 320 pp., $29.95 (cloth), $14.95 (paper)

Cousins and The Death of Papa: The Final Two Plays From the Orphans' Home Cycle
by Horton Foote
New York: Grove Press; 194 pp., $18.95 (cloth), $9.95 (paper)

The Trip to Bountiful, Tender Mercies, and To Kill a Mockingbird: Three Screenplays
by Horton Foote
New York: Grove Press; 219 pp., $19.95 (cloth), $9.95 (paper)

◆

Ordinary people, we are told, ordinarily speak in clichés, bromides, and dotty banalities, and it is the task of the literary artist, of the playwright in particular, to give them expressive and convincing words. This is the practice of Aeschylus and Shakespeare, of Tennessee Williams and Tom Stoppard. The success of heightened language upon the stage is undeniable; Hamlet ponders and Lear rages and the language they utter is as much a spectacle for the ear as the high deeds and carnage are visual spectacles.

But spectacular diction can cause problems. Lear rages, yes, but only the most accomplished actor can give point to his rage and poignance to his lament; often enough our stage Hamlet appears not a thoughtful troubled youth, but a long-winded wimp. We spectators have difficulty in suspending our disbelief; always in our inmost thoughts we know that people really don't talk that way and never did, not in Shakespeare's time, nor in Euripides', nor in our own. Most assuredly not in our own time.

So that there has arisen another tradition of stage diction that we might call the Laconic and that may derive in modern times from Chekhov. This tradition employs, insofar as it can, only the most ordinary words and sentences, the same phrases we hear at the supermarket and in traffic court. It is a poor medium for revealing the secrets of our heart, we think, savorless and without individuality, as drab as galoshes but not as serviceable.

The playwright who chooses to employ laconic rather than heightened diction may have elaborate philosophic motives for his choice. Harold Pinter's characters are less interested in revealing secrets than in keeping them hidden, even from themselves, and their terse cryptic sentences generate a steely tension. The banal phrases of Paddy Chayevsky's timid bachelors display their uneasiness with social custom, with courtship and every formal occasion, because for all their immersion in the urban crowd they are lonesome strangers. Samuel Beckett's use of dull colloquialism requires the premise of characters so dimwitted that the commonplaces they mouth with such fearful determination are actually products of the deepest cogitation they can muster.

Our example at hand, though, is Horton Foote, whose usage of ordinary language differs from almost everyone else's usage. Of contemporary playwrights only Peter Taylor and Reynolds Price approach Foote in purpose and to successful effect, and neither Price nor Taylor is content to keep his language at such a low level of intensity; they both rise to rhetoric when their stories need heightened diction.

The difference between Foote and similar practitioners is one of respect. For this solidly rooted playwright people speak the way they do because they find everyday speech expressive; no matter how trivial it may seem to the cultivated literary sensibility, the cliché says what is in the heart of a citizen of Harrison, Texas. It doesn't say all that is in his heart, but then neither do Hamlet's soliloquies tell us all. And the reason that such flat colloquial diction is expressive for one of Foote's characters is that it is understood by others; speech is less a matter of self-expression than an act of social reassurance. A language code is present in all of Foote's situations, a code formulated in these terms: "I will say only what you expect me to say, but I expect you to understand that I think and feel things that neither you nor I have words to express. In this way, I expect that you will understand me completely."

Here is Wilma Thompson talking in the 1953 one-act play, *A Young Lady of Property*: "You know sometimes my old house looks so lonesome it tears at my heart. I used to think it looked lonesome just whenever it had no tenants, but now it comes to me it has looked lonesome ever since Mama died and we moved away, and it will look lonesome until some of us move back here."

These lines come about as close as Horton Foote cares to get to "poetic" diction. If they went an inch forward toward poetry, they would be phony; if they slipped an inch back toward the common, they would be bathetic. We can hear in them the tone of plangent lament for the past that we hear from Mrs. Watts in *The Trip to Bountiful*, a screenplay written 30 years later. In both plays Foote makes his characteristic point that by renewing a relationship with the past one can aid a determination to live more amply and more effectively in the present. Wilma Thompson and Mrs. Watts turn a momentary regard upon the beautiful things that used to be in order to face the bleak present and the bleaker future. Both of them know that their futures can have no meaning until they have paid their respects to the past; they realize that they have no stake in the present unless the past is always included as a part of it.

The strong people, the characters whom misfortune and disaster can wound but never destroy, are those who have kept the past firmly with them here and now and ever after. In *Cousins*, published first in 1979 as one of the nine plays of *The Orphans'*

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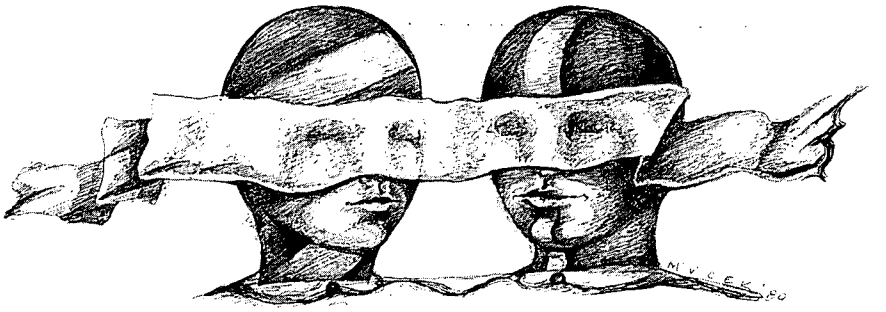
Home Cycle, Horace and Elizabeth Robedaux remember the birthday of their dead daughter, Jenny. "I thought later I'd walk out to the cemetery and take a flowering plant of some kind. Maybe a poinsettia," Elizabeth says. "I don't forget her. I remember Mrs. Huston telling me at the time I would, but I don't. It's like Mama says, you think of her differently than the others, but you think of her."

Mrs. Huston says one thing, but Mama says the other . . . The memory of Jenny's birthday is not private; the differing opinions of the community are attached to the event so firmly that Jenny remains—for her mother, anyway—a member of the community. To think of this birthday is to compare communal views about our relationship with the dead.

The characters whom Foote has drawn as happy or content are those who have found a way to come to terms with the past, who have in some sense made their peace with the dead. Mrs. Watts in *The Trip to Bountiful* wants to die in her home, a place that has vanished from the face of the earth. Twelve miles from her destination she is apprehended by a sheriff and to him she makes her plea: "Let me go these twelve miles . . . before it's too late. Understand me. Suffering I don't mind. Suffering I understand. I didn't protest once! Even though my heart was broken when those babies died. But these fifteen years of bickering, of endless, petty bickering. It's made me like Jessie Mae sees me. It's ugly. I will not be that way. I want to go home. I want to go home."

"Suffering I understand," she says, but she does not. She only means here that she has experienced a great deal of suffering and expects it as a normal part of life. But she does not comprehend why suffering is necessary. Earlier she has confessed to Thelma, her seatmate on the bus, the great shame of her life, the fact that she wasn't in love with her husband. "Do you believe we are punished for the things we do wrong? I sometimes think that's why I've had all my trouble. I've talked to many a preacher about it; all but one said they didn't think so. But I can't see any other reason."

On one side, then, Mrs. Watts' trip to Bountiful is a penitential pilgrimage toward expiation. On the other side, it is the satisfying of a compulsive need to make sure that her past actually did take place, that her identity is consonant with the facts of her life as she knows them. It is an ordinary fate in our century to become an orphan of history: our parents and relatives die or are killed, the towns where we were born, or even the nations, change their names and are robbed of their cultures and heritages, sometimes even of their languages. Our present life is so puzzling in shape, so hysterical in tone, so inimical in its daily details, that it seems merely phantasmal, a nightmarish delusion. How could we get from the *there* that we remember to the *here* that is so dreadful to endure? The bridges between past and present have been destroyed, and Foote's characters have to make extraordinary efforts to reach toward the past, to assure themselves that their memories are true and not illusory daydreams.



The Death of the Old Man is a television play of 1953. It is told in subjective camera from the point of view of Will Mayfield, the old man who has been rendered speechless by stroke. He hears his sons discussing the fate of their maiden aunt, Rosa, and deciding that they are unable to take her in. One of the sons explains his feelings: "I refuse to feel guilty over it. I'd like to be with Papa and open my home to Rosa and the world, but the times have changed, Tom. People can't live that way anymore."

In his paralysis, the old man hears these words and makes a fearful vow, almost Lear-like in its sudden but powerless intensity: "Let me out of this bed . . . let me out . . . I'll work again. I'll fill the banks with money. I'll buy houses and land and protect us from the dark days because kindness has gone from the world, generosity has vanished."

As it turns out in the play, Rosa finds a place for herself and Will Mayfield dies, as he tells us, "in peace and contentment." But this happiness is made possible by particular circumstances, and there is no defense against the debilitating and sometimes brutalizing changes that time brings.

There is no defense but there are some momentary stays against confusion. While the community exists, it is possible and comforting to take a place in it. Religion offers no final answers for Foote's stricken searchers, no final security, but it does give a steady solace, some part of which is social in nature. The best attitude to take seems that of Mac Sledge in *Tender Mercies*, whose quizzical Christian stoicism puts more than a measure of faith in human relationships and none at all in worldly circumstance. "You see," he says, "I don't trust happiness. I never did. I never will."

Mac's outlook appears cheerless, but he understands it—as Foote seems to understand it—as reality. Yet, if there is little coziness in his philosophy, there is never the kind of heartbreak in it that Phil Massey discovers in his fantasies. *The Land of the Astronauts* is a one-act play of 1988 and depicts Foote's familiar Texas landscape as having changed into a Disneyland where dreams of the luminous future can addle a man like Massey, deceive him into believing that happiness is just barely beyond his outstretched fingers.

Massey describes his longing and frustration with these words: "I work in a restaurant and I go to school at night. Day after day. Year after year. And nothing happens. I go to Houston to look for work and nothing happens and nothing is going to happen and I want something to happen. Is that too much to ask? I want something for once to happen to me. Why can't I go up into space and leave this earth and all its troubles and frustrations behind?"

His wife Lorena makes a reply that embodies Horton Foote's deepest con-

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victions. "Well, even if you went, you would have to come back down sometime, or you would die. Come on home with me now."

Fred Chappell's latest book, due this fall from St. Martin's, is Brighten the Corner Where You Are. *His long poem,* Midquest, *has just been reprinted by Louisiana State University Press.*

The Twenty Years' War

by Joseph Adelson

The IQ Controversy, the Media, and Public Policy
by Mark Snyderman and Stanley Rothman
New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books; 192 pp., $24.95

◆

"Intelligence" may offer the clearest example we have of how ideology can corrupt social science. Although the topic has been politicized by both left and right, during the last generation the ideological pressures have come almost entirely from the left, and along these lines: that intelligence is essentially the product of experience—above all, the nature of the child's environment—the genes having little to do with it; group differences in test performance are spurious, contrived to favor the socially privileged; the meaning of intelligence is in any case unclear; and the methods of measuring it inadequate and likely to be prejudicial.

This indictment reflects a more general aversion towards heredity, intelligence being only one of a large number of qualities where a genetic influence is denied. Until recently, schizophrenia was thought to be produced by pathological childrearing, despite much evidence for a significant biological influence. When the infantile autism disorder (the "Rain Man" syndrome) was diagnosed in the 1940's, it was also taken to be the result of a disturbed upbringing—in this case, by a "refrigerator mother." This assumption, especially, illustrates vividly the power of dogma over observation, as significant features of the syndrome point to a strictly neurological explanation.

Although fierce environmentalism has given way where severe mental disorder is concerned, it remains stubbornly in place regarding intelligence. It is not hard to see why: measured intelligence is highly correlated with both social class and class origin. Professionals (and their children) score higher than skilled tradesmen (and theirs) who, in turn, score higher than unskilled laborers and their offspring. While this tells us little about the genetics of intelligence, nevertheless it is sometimes taken quite seriously indeed: environmentalists argue that the class-IQ linkage demonstrates that the socially-favored pass on their social advantages; hereditarians hold that genetic merit is rewarded economically. The argument is intensified by the black-white disparity in tested intelligence. As the authors of this excellent study tell us, observed racial difference is at the heart of the modern IQ controversy, where it has produced a resistance to "rational public discussion." Are those differences due to test bias, or the outcome of deprivation? If not—what then?

There is another element in the dispute—the struggle to dominate public opinion. Many environmentalists are willing to acknowledge some hereditary contribution to intelligence, as long as it is kept out of sight. They fear that ordinary citizens, not grasping the subtleties of the argument, will find their bigotry toward members of social and racial minorities confirmed, a result that would reduce support for special efforts intended to benefit the deprived. In short, the IQ controversy involves much more than an argument about the "facts"; it concerns equally how facts are to be understood.

All these issues and many more are covered in this exemplary work. Snyderman and Rothman have given us a remarkably complete account of the controversy, its history, and current status. That is a considerable achievement, since it comprises a large number of smaller disputes, some of them highly technical. We have here a balanced, accessible, and accurate appraisal of the evidence, subordinated to an ingenious format that combines discussions of the central questions with a survey of expert opinion. Over six hundred scholars, chosen for their competence in testing and education, were questioned on such issues as the definition of intelligence, its measurement, its relation to later success, the plausibility of group differences, and its heritability. We learn that these specialists "share a common view of the most important components of intelligence, and are convinced that it can be measured with some degree of accuracy." They "also believe that individual genetic inheritance contributes to variations in I.Q. within the white community," a somewhat smaller majority expressing "the same view about Black-White and SES (socioeconomic status) differences in I.Q."

Should these conclusions come as a surprise to you, the reason is probably the discrepancy between them and what you've gathered from television and the better newspapers. The pivotal part of this book examines how the subject of intelligence has been covered by the media, through content analyses of news reports carried by the major news magazines, the television networks and the most influential national newspapers. These reports, the authors found, were both wanting in their grasp of the complexities of the subject and affected by a tendency to reduce, simplify, and dramatize them. Those are sins generic to journalism, of course, and to that degree they can be understood, if not quite forgiven; far more troubling is the frequency of serious error. For example, such significant figures as Arthur Jensen and Richard Hernstein were reported to hold views they would not entertain for a minute. Most troubling of all, as you might guess, is the consistency and pervasiveness of comfortably biased assumptions: that IQ is a myth, that intelligence is hard to define and measure, that IQ tests are racist and sexist and don't predict much of anything anyway, and that heredity has almost nothing to do with intelligence. The media offers a topsy-turvy view of reality, in which mainstream scholarly opinion is represented as deviant while genuinely deviant views, such as those espoused by Leon Kamin, are treated as widely accepted conclusions. The explanation is that the media have been free to determine who is and who is not an expert, what is and is not the truth, and have elevated scholarly views they find ideologically acceptable above those they consider "reactionary" and unacceptable.

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It is now 20 years since the appearance of Jensen's article on early education—that shot heard around the world, initiating the IQ controversy in its modern version. Since then, we have witnessed an explosion of new information, which has deepened our view of the issues without seriously altering its essential direction. Yet we find the same division between the psychometrician's understanding of IQ and that of liberal opinion, which continues to dominate the media.

Not long ago, the *Today Show* presented a woman telling us that the SAT is discriminatory because girls find some questions harder to answer than boys do. She was rebutted by a woman from the Educational Testing Service who said otherwise, and who knew what she was talking about—as her adversary plainly did not. Yet both women seemed equally plausible; how could ordinary citizens choose between them? A great many no doubt took their cue from Jane Pauley's smirk, signaling that yet another grave injustice to women had been uncovered. The real injustice, however—to both men *and* women—may be that that buzzword, "discrimination," deters us from examining more significant questions: e.g., why have the SAT scores for both sexes in the United States declined so sharply during the last quarter century, and why have boys' scores made a partial recovery while girls' scores have not? As Barbara Lerner—an authentic expert on these matters—has said, disparaging the tests or doing away with them will not help our youngsters, while hurting minorities and women worst of all.

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The Suez Files

by Antony T. Sullivan

Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes
by Mohamed H. Heikal
New York: Arbor House; $18.95

◆

One reads this book almost with nostalgia. The 1950's, and the dramatic events that occurred during that decade in the Middle East, are the subject of these historically important recollections by Mohamed Heikal, confidant of Gamal Abdel Nasser and distinguished editor of the Cairo newspaper *Akhbar el-Yom*. Heikal reminds us that during the 1950's relations between the Arab world and the West differed markedly from today, and that Nasser and other leaders eschewed the gnostic redemptionism that now so disfigures Arab, Israeli, and Islamic politics.

In this his sixth book, Heikal completes the story begun in his articles entitled "Political Inquiry," published in the Egyptian press in 1958 and 1967 and continued in his 1973 book, *The Cairo Documents: Nasser's International Relations*. *Cutting the Lion's Tail* is the English adaptation of *Milafatt es-Suways* ("The Suez Files") published in Cairo in 1986. The book is based on Heikal's notes of his almost daily conversations with Nasser, as well as on a rich lode of Egyptian archival material. It constitutes the authoritative Egyptian version of the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, and the subsequent invasion of Egypt by England, France, and Israel.

Heikal also discusses many of the other principal international issues of the time: the Baghdad Pact, Egyptian-Israeli relations, and financing of the Aswan High Dam. While predictably sympathetic to Nasser and many Egyptian goals, Heikal does succeed in maintaining a reasonable degree of objectivity while recounting his fascinating story.

No issue served more to poison relations between Egypt and the West than the Baghdad Pact. During 1954 and 1955, Britain, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, and Iran signed agreements pledging political and military collaboration to resist Soviet expansionism. The Baghdad Pact was midwifed by the United States, which did not, however, become a member. Pressure was exerted on Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan to join the pact. In Nasser's view, Israel, rather than the USSR, presented the greatest threat to Arab independence and unity. According to Heikal, Nasser feared that if Iraq persisted in its alliance with non-Arab powers, and especially if other Arab states joined that alliance, the Arab world would be cut in two and Egypt would find itself "isolated, deprived of any prospect of getting arms, and left to face the threat of Israel alone." Where Israel had divided the Arab world geographically, the Baghdad Pact, in Nasser's view, threatened to do so politically. In the event, no other Arab states joined the pact, and Iraq repudiated its membership following the Iraqi revolution in 1958.

Despite his formal opposition to Israel as a barrier dividing the Arab world, Nasser's real policy toward Israel was pragmatic. Heikal notes that in 1953 Nasser let David Ben-Gurion know that Egypt did not want a war because it wished to concentrate on economic development (Ben-Gurion's response was that this was the "worst news [he] had ever heard," because a developed Egypt might confront Israel with a serious challenge). In 1955, Nasser indicated his acceptance of the 1947 UN Palestine partition resolution. Heikal describes the sporadic Palestinian raids into Israel from the Egyptian Sinai and the massive Israeli military responses that ended any hope for peace, and helped to set the stage for the Suez invasion of 1956.

Today there is little argument that American cancellation of its offer to finance construction of the Aswan Dam was one of the greatest blunders in American diplomatic history. How the USSR benefited from this American misjudgment is well-known. Heikal emphasizes what Egyptians believed to be the deliberately offensive language in John Foster Dulles' final aide-mémoire on the subject, and that statement's devastating impact on the credibility of Ahmad Hussein, then-Egyptian Ambassador to the United States and a staunch supporter of close US-Egyptian relations. Within only a week Nasser struck back, announcing the nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956.

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During the three months between nationalization and the outbreak of war, Egypt proved that it could and would operate the Canal responsibly. Heikal notes that there was no interruption of traffic: during the first thirty days of the Canal's operation under Egyptian control traffic actually increased by 15 percent, and Egypt made no move to raise tolls to finance construction of the Aswan Dam, as some had feared. Nevertheless, England, France, and Israel perceived only that Nasser had apparently overreached himself, and finally had provided them a plausible excuse to remove him by force.

What is most interesting about Heikal's book, and will probably prove most controversial, is his analysis of the 1956 war. According to Heikal, Israel opened that campaign by invading Sinai on October 28, 1956, hoping to entice Egyptian troops eastward out of the Canal Zone, thereby opening the Canal to a lightning occupation by Britain and France. In Heikal's opinion, this strategy was worked out in advance by the three invading powers. At the critical moment, Nasser detected the ruse and withdrew many of the troops he had in Sinai to concentrate them along the Canal. Heikal describes how dumbfounded Nasser was when the tripartite collusion became clear. Not surprisingly, Nasser had expected Britain to have some consideration for its friends in Iraq, and both England and France to be sensitive to Western interests throughout the Arab world. The European powers, Heikal observes, had "committed the one unforgivable sin—combining with Israel to attack an Arab country. [Nasser] found the whole situation made no sense at all—it was, in fact, quite mad."

Militarily, Nasser determined to fight to the end in the Canal Zone, and to mount a guerrilla resistance were the Western powers to occupy Cairo. According to Heikal, a potential command center was reconnoitered in the Nile Delta, and a mobile transmitter dispatched there. Given a four-day delay by Britain and France in launching their assault, these contingency plans never had to be activated. Indeed, American diplomacy, along with tough Egyptian resistance, halted the European forces before they completed occupation of the Canal. What was perceived by Arabs as Nasser's partial triumph made resentment against the West less than it might have been, and America's repudiation of the action of its allies helped to preserve US interests in the Middle East. Heikal argues that only two victors emerged from the 1956 war: Egypt, but more especially the United States.

Heikal attacks as "legend" the belief in the brilliance of the Israeli army's performance in the 1956 war. According to Heikal, the Egyptian army made no concerted attempt to prevent the Israeli advance across Sinai, concerned as it was to defend the Canal Zone against Britain and France. What Egyptian troops remained in Sinai had no air cover, Heikal notes, and the Israeli force was augmented by French pilots. In this regard, future scholarship will have to determine whether Heikal's account of events, or that offered by Moshe Dayan in his 1966 book, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, is the more credible.

Of Nasser himself, perhaps the last, best word was said long ago by Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Whatever you think of him, at least he [was] a leader."

Antony T. Sullivan is director of Near East Support Services, a consulting firm.

A Tour of the Labyrinth

by Gregory McNamee

Mazes
by Hugh Kenner
San Francisco: North Point Press; 336 pp., $22.95

◆

Hugh Kenner, by day an unassuming professor of English literature at the Johns Hopkins University, is our foremost practitioner of the ancient cult of the maze, a celebrant of this endless labyrinth in which we live. Confronted with its mysteries, Mr. Kenner, the new Theseus, confidently draws on a lively knowledge of science, technology, music, architecture, language, art, politics, and literature to explain the way to comprehension. For three decades, it has been the pleasure of readers to watch his mind at work in a number of important, even revolutionary books, among them *The Pound Era*, a history of literary modernism, and *Bucky*, a critical inquiry into the life and work of Buckminster Fuller, who, to continue the metaphor, is our century's Hephaestus.

At the heart of Hugh Kenner's method, displayed throughout the pages of his new, aptly titled collection of essays, rests the doctrine that the truth—or such truth as there is—emerges from the intersection of reverberant facts. This intersection, he suggests, alone has explanatory power. In casually linked essays on the relevance of the study of scientific history to that of literature, for example, Mr. Kenner asks us to consider these encyclopedic details:

—Alexander Graham Bell had no telephone in his home, believing his invention to be appropriate only to commerce. Twenty years later, almost all the characters in James Joyce's *Ulysses* are seen to have private telephones. (This two-decade gestation period, he might have added, also characterizes the growth of the computer industry.)

—Thanks to Albert Einstein and his principle of Time Dilation, we now understand that there is no universal time. The medium truly is the message.

—Mandelbrot functions, the basis of fractal geometry, demonstrate once and for all that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. And the inventor's name means "almond bread" in Yiddish. The almond tree was sacred in ancient Rome.

—William Shakespeare's vocabulary comprised some 29,000 words; a complete modern English lexicon numbers more than a million. T.S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men" relies on 417 words, 187 different ones, a mere 65 of which constitute three-quarters of the poem.

These are radiant details, gathered by a lifetime's exploration and tinkering, actions that underlie so-called "cultural literacy." Kenner, not drawing undue attention to his cleverness in having ferreted out such facts, is quick to point out that in themselves they contain no great truths; singly, they are only curiosities. But draw such oddments together, Kenner instructs, and you have the thread leading through

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the labyrinth of the world. "The great encyclopedic minds of antiquity—Aristotle, Cicero, Confucius—wouldn't have known what a fact was," he writes. "They beheld a kaleidoscope of interacting principles in which no event stays still long enough to have its tail salted. . . . [knowledge] might entail the study of virtually everything."

And so *Mazes* touches on virtually everything. In the fifty pieces that make up the book, Kenner writes variously of the higher mathematics, evolutionary theory, the physical discomforts produced by modern book design, economics, movies, museums, the relative chaos or order of one's writing table, climatology, lexicography, linguistics, the state of copy editing in commercial publishing, the accomplishments of friends and mentors, interior design, electoral politics ("we're governed by caricatures," he writes, "because we perceive by them"), electronics, chess, the decline of apprenticeship in Georgian England. Taking his title to heart, Kenner even offers an illuminating piece on how to escape from a maze, a useful string of information to memorize before venturing into any labyrinth—London's Hampton Court, let us say, or a new piece of software.

Kenner invites comparison with Michel de Montaigne; his diverting articles are essays, "attempts," in exactly the sense that Montaigne, who invented the modern form, intended. They are joyful trials of discovery, and they are almost always successful, although Mr. Kenner's enthusiasms are sometimes misguided. Like many others, he makes a cult figure of Henry David Thoreau, who, remember, weekly compromised his legendary self-sufficiency by taking his wash home to his mother. Ever the champion of the modernists, Kenner can write with a straight face that T.S. Eliot "slaved" in a British bank, ignoring Eliot's well-documented contentment with his work and embarrassment at his friends' efforts to buy him away from his post. (In any event, can the work of a bank officer really be equated with that of a slave?) And Kenner's essays in defense of Marshall McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller are much too easy, waving away justifiable criticisms against the work of these masters of self-promotion.

But imperfections accompany experimentation of any kind, and Kenner is not at all to be faulted for the rare slip. Part of the joy of negotiating a path through a thicket of details, after all, is in chasing up errors, in testing one's own knowledge and opinions; Kenner's sharp but good-natured essay on *The Random House Encyclopedia* offers a case in point. *Mazes* offers university-level instruction (and would that universities were as good) in a dozen disciplines, teaching as it delights. It is a pleasure to read, a fine addition to Hugh Kenner's body of work, and a worthy monument to spirited intelligence and, not coincidentally, to that wonderful cult of the maze.

Gregory McNamee is the author of a forthcoming book of essays, The Return of Richard Nixon. *He lives in Tucson, where he is editor in chief of the University of Arizona Press.*

Zorba the Comrade

by Michael Warder

Russia: A Chronicle of Three Journeys in the Aftermath of the Revolution
by Nikos Kazantzakis
Translated by Michael Antonakes and Thanasis Maskaleris
Berkeley, CA: Creative Arts Book Co.; 270 pp., $18.95

◆

Love him or hate him, Nikos Kazantzakis is a force to be reckoned with. Best known in America for *Zorba the Greek* and—thanks to the Martin Scorcese movie—*The Last Temptation of Christ*, Kazantzakis wrote what many consider to be the greatest epic poem of the 20th century, *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*. His impact today, 32 years after his death in 1957, remains powerful, despite the relative obscurity of his native language.

Russia derives from three trips that Kazantzakis made from 1925 through 1929. In his mid-40's at the time, he was simultaneously sympathetic to the Soviet Union and repulsed by it, in a way that was perhaps reflective of his own unresolved tensions in matters of philosophy and art. The sympathy stemmed in part from Kazantzakis' own attempt to reconcile the religious and mystical tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy with modernity and its children, the Enlightenment and material well-being. Marx and Lenin became figures, as large as Moses and Jesus, who had ushered in "a fanatical, mystically passionate and dogmatic religion: atheism." Describing the city of Moscow, he says that the "Kremlin rose in front of me: the heart of Moscow, and today, I believe, the heart of the world."

While it would have been difficult to nominate Calvin Coolidge's Washington as a contender for the title of "Heart of the World," more than sixty years later such language seems unnecessarily hyperbolic, to say the least. Still, Kazantzakis saw the world as Pompeii and Russian communism as the first bubbles of lava from a volcano about to erupt and transform that world. He was convinced that the contradictions between spirit and matter, and Christianity and science, would be resolved in a new synthesis that would take into account the Marxist challenge. Because Kazantzakis had a vision of history that was highly critical of consumerism and the capitalist drive to acquire, his Soviet hosts believed that they had in him an intellectual who could be useful to them in their appeal to his confrères in the West. They provided for his creature comforts and travel, and he wrote for *Pravda* and the Soviet cinema while in the country. For his part, Kazantzakis felt that his ideas, derived from Henry Bergson and Nietzsche and drawing on Christianity, Buddhism and—of course—the Greek classics, would have something to offer Russian culture when it began to enter its postcommunist phase.

A Soviet prison tour so impressed Kazantzakis that he recounts for several pages the propaganda about rehabilitation through labor and further remarks on the good health of the inmates. When an acquaintance called him to task for his naiveté, Kazantzakis answered in a manner that Machiavelli and Orwell both might ponder: "Only by yearning, deceiving and being deceived—in other words by believing—can man change the face of the earth."

And yet, Kazantzakis was not really

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a "political pilgrim." He did not describe in only "positive" terms the New Soviet Man. His description of the director of the publication *Atheist* is hardly suitable propaganda, and his vision of Baku, the petroleum capital, pierces through the repetitive chatter of the Soviet guides: "It was raining, a biting cold. We waded in the mud, inside a forest of drilling towers. The air was greasy, the earth vomited oil. Black-green bogs everywhere . . . Here in this contemporary inferno, blackened workers, oiled like rats, struggled to earn their daily bread, smeared by fumes and petroleum." By the late 1930's Kazantzakis held the belief that Communism was more exploitative and materialistic than capitalism. He likened it to a forest fire that had to run its course in order to build a new society. Nor did his Soviet hosts ever publish any of his books, or allow them to be sold.

Perhaps the lasting significance of the trips to Russia lies in the thought and experience it provided for Kazantzakis' masterpiece, the *Odyssey*. He began drafting it before his Russian tours and devoted himself to it immediately afterwards, completing the work in 1938 at the age of 55. Most of the other fiction for which he has received world acclaim was written after World War II, in a remarkable spurt of creativity that seems to have required, as with Odysseus, a lifetime of soul searching, and many travels.

Michael Warder is executive vice president of The Rockford Institute.

Dionysus in the Trenches

by Gregory J. Sullivan

The Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age
by Modris Eksteins
Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.; 396 pp., $24.95

◆

In his masterly *Ideas Have Consequences*, Richard Weaver (who was fond of the long view) marked the decline of the West from the late 14th century with the development of William of Occam's doctrine of nominalism. In the short view, though, it is obvious that the Great War was the watershed of modernity: what remained of the center was destroyed forever. The role of modernism in the culture that plunged into the trenches is a relatively unexamined one. Modris Eksteins argues in *Rites of Spring* that inasmuch as modernism represents "the principal urge of our time," it figures prominently in the orgy of slaughter that has given this century its nightmarish quality.

On May 29, 1913, at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, the Stravinsky-Diaghilev-Nijinsky ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* opened. Eksteins' thesis is that this ballet, which Stravinsky had originally titled *The Victim*, constitutes "One of the supreme symbols of our centrifugal and paradosical century . . . with its rebellious energy and its celebration of life through sacrificial death, [it is] perhaps the emblematic *oeuvre* of a twentieth-century world that, in its pursuit of life, had killed off millions of its best human beings." *Le Sacre du printemps*, moreover, tokened the radical shift in artistic intention that we have come to associate with modernism; with this work, Eksteins says, "Art has transcended reason, didacticism, and a moral purpose: art has become provocation and event," and thus central to the turbulence of the age.

Eksteins traces the avant-garde's obsession with the life-through-death motif into the German soul. Germany—"the modernist nation *par excellence*," as he puts it—craved war to affirm life, vitality; war, in fact, was seen as "a spiritual necessity." The war, then, was *not* merely a war of territorial conquest.

Drawing extensively on letters and diaries, Eksteins is able to take the reader into the trenches, so to speak, vividly recreating their appalling horror, mud, and tedium. Men perished in mass numbers in this mass war (60,000 British troops were killed on the first days at the Somme); so, too, did the abstractions that motivated them to fight dutifully for God and country. As Hemingway's Lt. Frederic Henry remarks in *A Farewell to Arms*: "Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates." And with language went "Reality, a sense of proportion, and reason," which Eksteins maintains "were the major casualties of the war."

Depicting the ethos of this time is not easy, but Eksteins isolates two key events that are highly illustrative. First, he provides a fine interpretation of the

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—*from* Franklin Computer News

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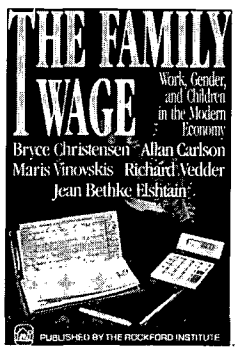
enthusiastic reception of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a work that utterly captivated an international audience mired in despair. Second, into this malaise flew Charles Lindbergh, the solitary American hero who was treated as a god in Europe. He was seen as the new technological messiah, his flight symbolic of the idea that "Man has been set loose. Freedom was no longer a matter of being at liberty to do what is morally right and ethically responsible. Freedom had become a personal matter, a responsibility above all to oneself."


THE FAMILY WAGE
Work, Gender, and Children in the Modern Economy
Bryce Christensen Allan Carlson
Maris Vinovskis Richard Vedder
Jean Bethke Elshtain
PUBLISHED BY THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE

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Irrationalism, despair, technology—add kitsch and the stage is set for the Nazi version of the dance of death. At the outset of *Rites of Spring*, Eksteins intimates that "Nazi kitsch may bear a blood relationship to the highbrow religion of art proclaimed by many moderns." Later, he makes the connection explicit: "Nazism was a popular variant of many of the impulses of the avant-garde. It expressed on a more popular level many of the same tendencies and posited many of the same solutions that the avant-garde did on the level of 'high art.' Above all, it, like the moderns it claimed to despise, tried to marry subjectivism and technicism." Certainly the futuristic emphasis—which assumes a repudiation of conventions, values, and ultimately history—of the avant-garde was shared by the Nazis. Eksteins rejects the view of Nazism as reactionary or conservative. "Contrary to many interpretations of Nazism," as he observes,

> which tend to view it as a reactionary movement . . . the general thrust of the movement, despite archaisms, was futuristic. Nazism was a headlong plunge into the future, toward a "brave new world." Of course it used to full advantage residual conservative and utopian longings, paid its respects to these romantic visions . . . but its goals were, by its own lights, distinctly progressive. . . . The intention of the movement was to create a new type of human being from whom would spring a new morality, a new social system, and eventually a new international order.

In Nazism, that is, the ideals of the avant-garde had found a home, as they had settled in Germany prior to the Great War. Hitler, of course, was at the eye of the storm, and Eksteins sees him as "The ultimate kitsch artist, he filled the abyss with symbols of beauty. The victim he turned into the hero, hell into heaven, death into transfiguration." When the end came for Hitler, he was in his bunker, surrounded by the destruction he had unleashed, and in the canteen of the chancellery a dance began and continued even after word had been sent from the bunker to quiet down. Eksteins' terse final sentence is arresting: "A popular German song in 1945 was entitled "Es ist ein Frühling ohne Ende!" ("It Is Spring Without End!").

But for all of Eksteins' sophisticated cultural and social insights, he surprisingly neglects any extended treatment of Christianity—or, rather, the absence of Christianity—in this entire tragedy. After all, as Paul Johnson argues in *Modern Times*, it is "the decline and ultimate collapse of the religious impulse" and the ascent of moral relativism that is largely responsible for the terrifying fragmentation of our century. Also, the modernist movement is more diverse than Eksteins suggests. Continental modernists may have diabolically reveled in the dissolution that they helped engender, but the Anglo-American version of modernism—one thinks of Eliot, Faulkner, and David Jones—sought a way back to the center. Still, "The Great War," as he says, "was to be the axis on which the modern world turned," and its cultural causes and consequences are comprehensively and, at times, brilliantly examined in *Rites of Spring*. I had not thought death had undone so many.

Gregory J. Sullivan writes from Trenton, New Jersey.

Learning to Behave

by Joseph Baldacchino

The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism
by F.A. Hayek
Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 180 pp., $24.95

◆

When I heard on the radio one morning in 1974 that Friedrich Hayek had won the Nobel Prize in economics, my first thought was, "Not *our* Friedrich Hayek?" A few hours later, upon meeting a libertarian acquaintance of some prominence, I asked, "Did you hear about Hayek?" The reply was: "No. Did he die?"

I offer these vignettes because they illustrate how dramatically the assessment of Hayek, even among his most ardent admirers, has changed over the last decade and a half. It is hard to

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recall, now that a small army of free-market theorists has followed Hayek to Stockholm, what an unexpected sea change in the world's approach to economics was heralded by his receipt of the Nobel. Or how unlikely it seemed in 1974 that Hayek, who at 75 years of age had produced an unusually voluminous but uniformly profound body of scholarly writing on a wide range of subjects, was nearer to the midpoint of his distinguished career than to its end.

Far from resting on his laurels, Hayek has pursued his scholarly mission with undiminished vigor and acuity. His latest book, *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*, is being published by the University of Chicago Press as Volume I of a new collection of Hayek's work, a series that is projected to comprise 22 volumes. The book takes its title from what Hayek, after many years of study, has concluded is man's most dangerous folly: undue pride of intellect, the indulgence in an unreasonable form of "reason" that does not know its own limitations. This "fatal conceit" manifests itself in several forms. In one aspect, it is the notion, which has been a central pillar of socialism, that man, through his reason, "is able to shape the world around him according to his wishes," not marginally or in a limited manner but to the *nth* degree. Another manifestation is the self-satisfied belief that man has no obligation to obey or respect rules the purposes of which are not fully transparent to his momentary intellect. Yet another variation is the belief that unless a civilized order can be shown to be the product of a comprehensive, rational, man-made design, it has no value or right to exist.

Like his teacher, Ludwig von Mises, Hayek sees institutions such as private property and the price system as indispensable to human welfare. These institutions, Hayek notes, make it possible for millions of individuals—each acting independently with the widely diverse knowledge and ability available to him—to satisfy human needs and desires far more efficiently than any central planning agency could accomplish. But, unlike Mises, who tended to view free-market institutions as the products of conscious choice based on abstract reason, Hayek is sensitive to the high degree to which these institutions are dependent for their existence on traditions, customs, and rules developed over millennia whose full value man only dimly perceives.

"Learning how to behave is more the *source* than the *result* of insight, reason, and understanding," Hayek writes. "Man is not born wise, rational and good, but has to be taught to become so. It is not our intellect that created our morals; rather, human interactions governed by our morals make possible the growth of reason and those capabilities associated with it. Man became intelligent because there was *tradition* . . . for him to learn. This tradition, in turn, originated not from a capacity rationally to interpret observed facts but from habits of responding. It told man primarily what he ought or ought not to do under certain conditions rather than what he must expect to happen."

Hayek attributes the strong emotional appeal of socialism to its flattery of "genetically inherited instincts" of solidarity and altruism that are anachronistic—throwbacks to a time long ago when men lived in "small roving bands or troops." Such instincts were highly useful to a primitive order in which all of the members were known personally to each other and "were guided by concrete, commonly perceived aims," Hayek argues. But they are largely unsuited—hence inimical—to life in our present, highly complex order, which enables millions upon millions of individuals to serve the needs of people about whose existence they are unaware and in turn to have their own needs served by these multitudes of unknown others.

Though emphasizing that he does "not claim that the results of group selection of traditions are necessarily 'good,'" Hayek adds:

> I do claim that, whether we like it or not, without the particular traditions I have mentioned, the extended order of civilization could not continue to exist . . . ; and that if we discard these traditions, out of ill-considered notions . . . of what it is to be reasonable, we shall doom a large part of mankind to poverty and death. . . .
>
> While facts alone can never determine what is right, ill-considered notions of what is reasonable, right and good may change the facts and the circumstances in which we live; they may destroy, perhaps forever, not only developed individuals and buildings and art and cities (which we have long known to be vulnerable to the destructive powers of moralities and ideologies of various sorts), but also traditions, institutions, and interrelations without which such creations could hardly have come into being or ever be recreated.

If there is any weakness in Hayek's treatment of these issues, it is a tendency to equate morality with procreation and survival. In so doing, he blurs the distinction between economics and ethics: categories that, while overlapping, are not identical. Though Hayek points convincingly to Aristotle's static conception of human affairs as a philosophical weakness that was to have substantial adverse repercussions on Western thought for the next two thousand years, Hayek's own line of thinking might benefit from Aristotle's dictum that man's goal should not be a mere life but the good life. Moreover, because Hayek identifies morality with rules that change in response to historical circumstances, he concludes that, "reluctant as we may be to accept this, no universally valid system of ethics can ever be known to us." Yet it is a relatively short distance from Hayek's position to the "value-centered historicism" outlined by Claes G. Ryn in his *Will, Imagination and Reason*, which demonstrates that ethical universality is not incompatible with change and diversity. Specifically, by identifying man's higher purpose with a special quality of will rather than with abstract rationality, value-centered historicism shows how universality is capable of being synthesized with ever-new circumstances.

But these criticisms, though pertaining to a central issue, are limited reservations about a body of work that merits the highest respect and is well-represented by this volume. It is noteworthy that Hayek, like very few of his contemporaries, has persistently asked the right questions about extremely complex matters and, with impressive

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frequency, has thought his way to penetrating answers.

Joseph Baldacchino, author of Economics and the Moral Order, *is associate editor of* Human Events *and president of the National Humanities Institute.*

The Terrestrial God

by Thomas Molnar

Sacralizing the Secular: The Renaissance Origins of Modernity
by Stephen A. McKnight
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press;
131 pp., $25.00

◆

It all depends on what we mean by "sacralizing" and "sacred," and to a lesser extent by "secular." The fact that Professor McKnight is a student of Eric Voegelin should not be left unmentioned in this regard, because for the recently deceased great scholar, "sacred" remained an elusive term. The word certainly referred to a dimension of man that differed from the secular and the profane, but it is not necessarily synonymous with what the monotheistic religions mean by it. To Voegelin, Eliade, Jung, Campbell, Rudolf Otto, and others, sacred meant the territory of awe, of numinous intervention, of participation in the cosmos and its forces.

In other words, for these scholars (and McKnight), the sacred is a tremendous worldview perfectly compatible with paganism, and to which Christianity has added a *sui generis* dimension but by no means annexed. We should keep these things in mind as we read McKnight's book.

Through his analyses of important Renaissance figures, McKnight tries to show why the Renaissance is falsely credited with the intention of secularizing the Middle Ages, when in fact it had tried to resacralize the just opening secular world and worldview. Not surprisingly, questions arise immediately. First, what was *secular* in the course of the Renaissance? The Humanists (Petrarch, Erasmus) formed only a modest corner, enlarged only in retrospect by today's modernists. Almost any Renaissance figure that scholars like Charles Nauert and Francis Yates studied was at least tainted by esoteric and occult interests and practices, whether Albrecht Dürer at one end or Francis Bacon at the other. Yates even brings Shakespeare in, and D.P. Walker of the Warburg Institute augments the list with many more names. In short, the line of demarcation between "secularizers" and "sacralizers" is becoming blurred.

But let us grant that the Renaissance was by and large a secular movement. In what sense did the men studied by McKnight *sacralize* it? True, they referred to an enormous ancient tradition of a basic wisdom, a *prisca theologia*, of a religion whose teachers were supposed to have taught Plato as well as Moses; their documents were obviously later fabrications, but accepted in good faith; their content was Pythagorean geometry, the Jewish Cabala, the Gnostic systems, and much more. The main objective was to redefine man, from Christian to magus, ultimately a terrestrial god in whose hands knowledge and power are equated. This much McKnight readily acknowledges and illustrates with appropriate quotations and discussion.

My question is: where is the sacralizing process in all this? Would it not be easier to set up another thesis? It could be briefly formulated. All those whom the author mentions were either loyal to the Christian religion or harboring other beliefs. A Marsilio Ficino and a Dürer fall in the first category, most of the rest in the second. The latter's objective was to demonstrate its incompatibility with the imminently dominant worldview ruled by science (and power). In order to pursue this design they had very little at their disposal, and certainly not the conceptual edifice by which they could have promoted it. Hence they resorted to an ancient, half-mythical occult practice inimical to conceptualization. But what counts is their intention, which (I repeat) was purely secular.

By the 17th century, they had arrived at their goal. Science was born carrying an overload of secularistic philosophy. Our history books are correct: the great initiators were Bacon and Descartes; both (especially the latter) made *tabula rasa* of the old Aristotelian/Scholastic concepts and formulated an entirely new conceptual reference system. Had Francisco Giorgi, the early 16th-century Venetian monk, possessed the algebraic language that Descartes elaborated a century later, we would celebrate him today instead of Father Mersenne's friend. The conclusion is that McKnight's "sacralizers" did not intend to sacralize the secular. They were groping for a science, a secular one (if words have a meaning), for which they had neither a terminology nor instruments; and with Descartes and Galileo, or rather their successors, they entered into the possession of both.

McKnight renders himself even more vulnerable when he brings Comte and Marx into the debate as more modern sacralizers of the secular. It may be argued that a process of sacralization or resacralization has been going on, with Voegelin and McKnight as its chroniclers. But it is no mere pedantry, I think, to point out that the process can be subsumed under the category of *secularization*. Leszek Kolakowski pointed out in a 1973 essay that all the profane mani-

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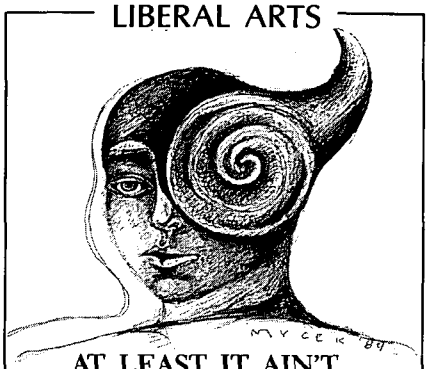

AT LEAST IT AIN'T MAPPLETHORPE

An ant farm with thousands of residents will be installed at Austin's Robert Mueller Municipal Airport as part of a public art program.

Texas leaf cutter ants will live in the glass-contained farm, the $48,000-plus centerpiece of a $200,000 Art in Public Places program by Minneapolis artist Richard Posner.

During last week's city council meeting, the farm's lone council critic, Mayor Lee Cooke, fiddled with a beautifully rendered, tiny black plastic ant.

Cooke squeezed his palm around the critter and mused, "I don't like the art."

—from the Houston Chronicle, *August 13, 1989*

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festations of things are accompanied by an intrinsic sacredness without which we could not even deal with them. The point is attractive, although it reduces the dimension of the sacred to a kind of cultural flavor, very popular these days. But it seems that neither Kolakowski nor McKnight speak actually of the sacred when they use the word. Not everything that is culture or cultural, or that expresses a human need to ritualize the secular and the profane, is sacred or sacralized. It would be better to understand the sacred as a divine intervention, not a manipulation of things in the name of half-understood mysteries.

McKnight's unquestioned merit is to pursue the Voegelinian theme and to discover chapters of modernity where none was suspected. To do so, however, we ought to possess workable definitions of the sacred and the secular, and of modernity itself. Much remains to be done.

Thomas Molnar's most recent book is Twin Powers: Politics and the Sacred.

REVISIONS

BACK AT THE RANCH: DOWN, OUT, AND OVER

While you might think that the author of a handful of short, loosely existentialist novels set in the vicinity of Key West would find the state of Montana to have little to contribute to his talents, and *vice versa*, in the case of Thomas McGuane you would be wrong. For McGuane, truly a man of parts as few novelists are (although, like Hemingway and Faulkner, they may pretend to be), is as successful training cutting horses as he is at writing the well-turned sentences that are as good as any being written in America today, and much better than most. By translating himself from Florida and his hipster existence there to the wide open spaces of Paradise, Montana, and its environs, McGuane seems, in effect, to have saved his own life. The irony lies in his subsequent discovery that his Montana neighbors are apparently losing theirs.

His new novel, *Keep the Change* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin/Seymour Lawrence; 230 pp., $18.95), is the second of his to have as its setting his adopted state; thematically it follows closely from its predecessor, *Nobody's Angel* (1982), about a NATO tank commander who has come home to the Rocky Mountains. In *Keep the Change* Joe Starling, a native son of the town of Deadwood, Montana, returns from a thwarted career as a painter in the East with the idea of rediscovering for himself the mythic existence of the Western rancher, only to find that nobody believes in it any longer except as a source of self-serving clichés. ("Joe had come to believe from reading books that in many landholding families, there existed perfect communication between the generations about the land itself. He noticed how many Southerners believed this. . . . Where had people gone wrong in the West? In the latest joke, leaving a ranch to one's children was called child abuse.") Contemporary Montana is a place where even the natives have never become used to the winters but live in fear of slipping on the ice, and where a successful cattle sale at season's end is regarded as a one-way ticket to the beaches of Hawaii. Determined to ignore all of this, Joe buys a bunch of yearlings and a horse, and runs cattle all summer on the ranch that his father (a local banker and s.o.b. who left Montana for Minnesota to drink and play golf) ought to have left him, but didn't. At the end of the summer he gets a good price for his animals, but his Uncle Smitty grabs the check for himself and flies to Hawaii; while Joe, though holding the deed his aunt has made over to him, in the watershed of personal crisis decides to sell out to a former friend and rival.

As a novelist, Thomas McGuane writes from the center of a decentered world, but one that he himself perceives to be decentered. While from one point of view, therefore, he might be thought guilty of poisoning his pristine new environment with the angst that is part of the sophisticated modern temperament, in reality he is simply registering that angst where he finds it, whether in Florida, New York, or Deadwood, Montana, (so aptly named). From East to West, North to South, as far as the Land of the Big Sky—country of Lewis and Clark, home of A.B. Guthrie, Jr.—we are all cosmopolites now.

(CW)

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Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Allons, Enfants de la Patrie

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It was years ago that I first read the collection of Donald Davidson's essays called *Still Rebels, Still Yankees*. In one of them, "Some Day, in Old Charleston," the doughty Last Agrarian addressed one of his perennial themes, the trashiness of modern civilization and the superiority of the Old Southern regime, by describing Charleston's Army Day parade of April 6, 1948.

Down King Street that day came "a ceremonious procession stepping to martial music, carrying flags and deadly weapons": columns of helmeted and booted paratroopers, Marines in red and blue, sailors "who looked unhappy as sailors always do when marching as infantry," the old Carolina regiments —Washington Light Infantry, Sumter Guards—, the Citadel band, the cadets of Porter Military Academy. Davidson was savoring the parade's order and decorum, "traditional and unalterable," when, suddenly, "more music, with a saucy blare in its horns and drums," and a high school band from upstart North Charleston appeared, led by a girl dressed as a blue devil and turning cartwheels—

> And behind her pranced a whole squad of drum majorettes. They threw their knees high to the beat of the drums. They tossed and swung their batons, twisted hips and bodies, nodded their heads under their grotesque shakos. They simpered brassily, their girlish features frozen in a Hollywood smile.

Oh, my (I thought). Brassy simpering? Twisted hips? Knees up? Steady, Don.

Davidson went on at lengths about the horror of "the naked legs of drum majorettes on King Street, in old Charleston." About majorettes "largely without clothes." About "the flesh and the devil" devoid of "any but the crudest meaning." About the traditional drum major displaced by "a follies girl, a bathing beauty, a strip-tease dancer," his baton now "the ornament by which the drum majorette attracts attention to her charms," this for "purposes that will not bear examination."

I've never forgotten this diatribe. You know how some associations are indelible? Like every time I put shaving cream on my face I think about Hagerstown, Maryland—and I don't even remember why? Well, a year later I couldn't have told you much else about Davidson's essay, but for 20 years and more every time I've thought about baton-twirling (which isn't often, I admit) I've thought about his revulsion at "the bare flesh of drum majorettes in their quasi-march."

I thought about it, for instance, when I read a snide but hilarious *Esquire* article on the Dixie National Baton Twirling Institute at Ole Miss, by Terry Southern, the author of *Candy*. (What would poor Davidson have thought of his beloved Southland's taking the lead in this activity, and being mocked for it by a pornographer?) I thought about it again when someone joked in the early days of the Carter administration that maybe a Southern president would come across with Arts Endowment grants for twirling schools? (I thought, too, about Davidson's prescient warning in *I'll Take My Stand* against federal cultural programs.) I thought about it when I went to my hometown's Christmas parade and encountered a half-dozen twirling schools, each with its students marching behind a sound-truck. ("The next logical step," Davidson had written, intending sardonic *reductio ad absurdum*, "would be to abandon the band and to substitute a sound-truck playing phonograph records—a sound-truck which could be preceded by and followed by and covered with a large company of drum majorettes, all twirling batons, all as little clothed as the censor would allow.") Finally, I thought about it when I read somewhere that the principal twirling stance, left hand on hip, is African in origin. (I don't know what else you do with your left hand when your right is engaged with a baton, but if there's anything to this theory I fear it may confirm the old segregationist's worst suspicions.)

My selective memory of Davidson's essay stuck with me, of course, because his disgust was so *violent*. Terry Southern thinks twirling is tacky—well, OK. But Davidson almost lost his lunch over it. Not just your average misogynist (I thought). Something of a dirty old man. A *repressed* dirty old man. Yuck.

But last July 14 the television coverage of the Bastille Day parade from Paris sent me back to that essay. As the ancient joke has it, it's remarkable how much the old man has learned. I may owe his shade an apology. I'd really lost sight of his point, which was about exploitation and "abstraction" and what would now be called commodification. He saw majorettes not just as an intrusion but as a perversion—perverting the beautiful, just as the big-time sports they often accompany pervert the gallant.

I think I know what Davidson would have made of the French extravaganza.

No doubt you heard that it was expensive. *Newsweek* put the cost at $67 million, more or less. The prime-time parade was put together by a young French-American named Jean-Paul Goude, heretofore best known for his work in advertising and music videos. "We're trying to prove a point," Goude told a television interviewer; he wanted, he said, to produce "a parade with a content." Of course that content had nothing to do with anything as boring as history or as atavistic as patriotism. "The French Revolution," he said (in an accent you can supply yourself), "is only a schoolbook souvenir to me. I mean, just cliché. It's a big cliché." Goude didn't even want to display the Tricolor, but he lost that battle.

He billed his parade as "The Festival

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of the Planet's Tribes," and its theme was supposedly the Rights of Man. In fact, it began well, with a moving tribute to the Chinese liberation movement smashed by the People's Army shortly before. Chinese acrobats had been supposed to tumble down the Champs-Elysées, but after the events of June they were replaced by a hundred or so Chinese students, simply walking their bicycles. Accompanying them was a float bearing a giant Chinese drum, silent. On the drum was a crudely lettered sign: "*Nous continuons.*" The only sound was the spooky ringing of bicycle bells.

But things went downhill swiftly from there. We had the "tribes of France" in Goude's rendition of French coal-miners' costumes and striped stockings, playing a tedious refrain by an African composer on accordions and hurdy-gurdies. (Two tribes, Basques and Bretons, mostly refused to participate.) We had tattered English punks, slouching along in an artificial drizzle, attended by hotel doormen carrying umbrellas. We had a hissing steam railroad, accompanied by sweaty barechested drummers (Dutch, I think). We had Soviet soldiers from Lenin's Tomb goose-stepping through artificial snow, and an ice-skating polar bear pursuing a flag-carrying Russian maiden on a rink carried on the shoulders of Soviet sailors. We had a dozen or so giant, deformed women who looked something like Goude's ex-wife Grace Jones, spinning atop what I presume were golf carts hidden in their voluminous skirts and carrying children who wore the costumes and bore the flags of many nations (including, I noticed, Palestine).

Most Europeans in the parade seemed to be militaristic automatons or outright degenerates, and perhaps this was no accident. This was clearly the ex-colonies' night. A striking African float held a six-sided pyramid of drummers, limbs akimbo, resembling something off a Hindu temple. The television coverage (which Goude mixed himself) returned again and again to a Senegalese float where spotlights and smoky torches illuminated tribal drummers and dancers: the drummers conducted by a maniacal figure in white tie and tails; the dancers, in tutus, a savage parody of Degas.

After all this the Florida A&M University marching band was downright homey as it moonwalked to James Brown's "I Feel Good." The Brit announcer said that Brown — A/K/A Mr. Please Please Please, the Godfather of Soul, Hardest Working Man in Show Business — is "one of Goude's great heroes." (This may be the only thing Goude has in common with Lee Atwater. Atwater visits Brown in the South Carolina hoosegow where he is now pulling time — deservedly, as even *Rolling Stone* seems to acknowledge.)

The announcer observed that the parade gave full play to Goude's "cartoon sensibility on an epic scale," and there's no denying that it was effective theater. But the message it conveyed (to me at least) wasn't the upbeat, brotherly one Goude had in mind. The dim, smoky, pulsating scene pierced now and again by flashbulbs as if by lightning, the techno-primitivism, the Third World flavor — it was a lot like the New York subway at rush hour. (Sorry. Couldn't resist. Actually it was a nightmare vision straight out of *Blade Runner*, and it gave me the creeps.)

The African and Asian and Arab presence, as striking in the parade as it is these days on the streets of Paris, illustrated vividly France's colonial chickens coming home to roost. ("Why are you here?" the Frenchman asks the Algerian immigrant. "Because you were *there*," the Algerian replies.) This phenomenon can be viewed with the fear and loathing of Jean Raspail's disturbing novel *The Camp of the Saints* or with the cheerful equanimity of a *Wall Street Journal* editorial, but for better or for worse the place will not be the same again. I'm sure Goude saw his parade as a celebration of that fact, but I'm afraid I saw it as another half-million votes for the thuggish Jean-Marie Le Pen and his nativist National Front.

"We're all from the Ganges now," some of the less admirable characters in Raspail's novel chirp, and Goude seems to share that view. We were told solemnly that he believes "World music can heal the divisions between nations." This belief "stems from his love of, almost obsession with, rhythms like [those] he heard in Senegal," a "relentless beat" he feels is "at the root of most of today's popular music."

Well, the parade's relentless beat did go on — and on. People paraded to hip-hop, R&B, and rap; to whining Moroccan music; to African drumming; to generic Oriental sounds. But aside from some Scottish bagpiping I heard no martial music. For that matter the only *French* music I heard was the "Marseillaise," at the end. And even that was sung by an American, soprano Jessye Norman. (Miss Norman seems to rank right below Jerry Lewis in the French pantheon of American cultural heroes, so when she asked to sing it her buddy the Minister of Culture apparently couldn't say no.) With the possible exception of "Dixie," the "Marseillaise" is the most stirring national anthem going; it usually makes me want to go sack a church or something. But Goude's lugubrious arrangement resembled that New Age stuff with whale noises. I perked up when Miss Norman was carried off, singing, on some sort of tumbrel, thinking maybe Goude had scheduled a date with the *belle dame sans merci* as a boffo conclusion. No such luck.

Far be it from me to tell other folks how to mark their historic anniversaries, especially the French. Since it's not my country I don't figure I've got much opinion coming. Besides, anyone who has been in a music video with a midget lady wrestler should probably keep his mouth shut about decadence. But even if you don't think much of the French Revolution, surely its bicentennial deserved better than this. Or did it, perhaps, somehow lead to this? Maybe Donald Davidson could explain.

I must say that it was something of a relief when Goude's festival was over and the channel I was watching reran the morning's military parade. There was something clean and purposeful about the cadets and fire brigades, the airplanes and APC's. Even the bearded Foreign Legionnaires with their leather aprons and axes looked jolly and wholesome, straight from the village smithy, their sinister half-time tread notwithstanding.

And now I begin to understand how Donald Davidson felt at the Army Day Parade in Charleston. As he watched the soldiers he took his characteristic grim pleasure from this "reminder . . . that the processes of government, laboratory science, liberalism, and expertise must be depended upon sometime,

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somewhere, to reach a breaking point, at which breaking point the army takes over and the ancient battle begins once more."

Not exactly words to stir hearts in Tiananmen Square, but after Goude's *jour de gloire* one can almost see Davidson's point.

John Shelton Reed left Paris two weeks before the festivities. As a rule, he views the world from Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

Not a Smashing Success

◆

It's the little things — not the front-page disclosures — that suggest to us that we've been had.

Take, for instance, a 1987-88 study by the Oregon Department of Transportation. ODOT studied 551 students between 16 and 19 years of age who had completed driver education programs, 581 students who said they *would* have taken the course had it been available, and 197 students who didn't take the course and weren't interested in doing so.

The project compared driver examination test scores and driving records of the 1,329 drivers, all of whom obtained their first driver's license between September 1987 and January 1988.

An article in the ODOT magazine explains that students who had taken driver education and *passed* the driver exam scored "significantly higher" on the law and knowledge part of the test, and "somewhat higher" on the behind-the-wheel portion, than those who passed the licensing test but had no interest in taking the course. On the other hand, the flunking rate for all groups was the same, whether or not they'd had training.

More amazing than this, though, was what ODOT Motor Vehicles Division researcher Barnie Jones was quoted as saying, "We found that the *driving records* of those who had taken student driver education and those who hadn't were very similar. The groups had virtually identical traffic accident and violation rates after six months and 13½ months of driving." In other words, driver ed doesn't change any lifestyles.

Now, in most states driver education is *mandatory* for high school students who expect to drive, and car and liability insurance is lower for kids who have taken the course. That was true even 20 years ago, when we were forced to sit in the simulator (we called it the "stimulator") and watch bloody movies about kids who drank and drove, movies so embarrassing that we giggled through them. Now ODOT has the nerve to say that driver ed really doesn't make much difference.

This also encourages thinking about other "mandatory learning experiences" that our kids don't need. What about physical education class? Does getting frustrated or sweaty for 40 minutes twice a week (and then either being denied a shower or forced to take one, gang-style, and re-dress in a sweaty locker room) teach our kids that sports are fun, that our bodies are temples? No PE teacher I've ever had has looked as if she *enjoyed* the job. Every 1989 American couch potato — and we come by the truckload — was forced to attend years and years of gym class. They just didn't "take." I learned in adulthood to enjoy several sports, moderately, but at the time I would rather have been reading. So sue me.

Then there's "hygiene" or "health" class. It's no secret that even though most teenagers are forced to take this class, they're still having babies during homeroom and making more of them after school. "Health" class *used* to mean learning how important it is to brush one's teeth and wash with soap; now third-graders learn exactly how to do things that I still had to guess about when I was in *college*. These children are also, presumably, being told about Death, and how it looms ever more near these days — after all, sex ed didn't move into elementary classrooms in a big way until what has come to be very wishfully called the "AIDS epidemic." I don't particularly *want* my third-grade son to know about condoms — and if he's not interested, let's give the kid a break. I tried to chat with him about babies one night as we did the dishes, and he finally turned to me and said, "Mom, I'm having a lot of trouble listening to this." Still, those babies keep dropping, so we ship the kids off to another state-mandated "health" class. Their time would be better spent in driver ed.

Does anyone remember "social studies"? It's still around. I didn't have a bona fide *history* class until I was in high school, and I didn't have geography until I was in college. In grade school and middle school we had "social studies," where in a dozen pages kids learn a smattering of the history, customs, and agriculture of a smattering of countries. A fourteen-year-old sixth-grade social studies book our household plodded grimly through last year "did" Italy in ten pages, covering the early Romans, grapes and olives, Mussolini, and everything in between (except the Pope, of course). That same book pronounced Kuwait the "world's most progressive nation," and asked, at the end of one chapter, whether North Vietnam or South Vietnam were the communist nation. (I didn't look, but I bet the Vietnam chapter talked about rice and the manufacture of straw hats.) Kids today still have "social studies," and then embarrass a puzzled nation when they flunk history and geography tests.

Then there's "defensive driving" for adults. Most states make a defensive driving class obligatory for those who have been in a traffic accident, regardless whether they were sober at the time. Now, an adult with a good record who has been in a fender-bender and who is really *interested* in learning a few little tips for driving more safely will take a lot home from such a class. The majority of drivers won't. And yet "defensive driving" courses are a big industry, and make a state or city *feel* as if it's doing something. It is, I guess: creating a cash flow.

But to get back to the driver ed students: I have a solution. If a kid does poorly on his exam or has a lot of accidents, just increase his mandatory PE classes. Make him run more laps and then endure the purgatory of gang showers — or return to class *un*showered. It'll keep him off the streets, and will be a right use of every aspect of gym class, which was, after all, *created* to punish.

Jane Greer edits Plains Poetry Journal *in Bismarck, North Dakota.*

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COMMONWEAL

Jeanne Berg

The Brave New World of Public Policy

by Richard D. Lamm

John Stuart Mill woke up one morning and had this overwhelming feeling that the "answer to the question of the ages" had come to him in the middle of the night. But he forgot what it was. He then placed a quill and paper next to his bed, and a few mornings later he awoke with a similar feeling; this time he found on the paper in his own handwriting, "Think in different terms."

We are sailing into a new world of public policy, a world as strange and new as the one Columbus discovered. It is a world where infinite government demands have run straight into finite resources. Most of our institutional memories and political culture come out of the 1960's and 1970's, when America had the industrial world's highest rate of productivity growth and was doubling its wealth every 30 to 40 years. Government had a substantial yearly growth dividend it could spend. Now we have the lowest rate of productivity growth in the industrial world, and it will take approximately 130 years to double our national wealth. We go into debt to maintain current levels of government. Being in government today is like sleeping with a blanket that is too short: we do not have the resources to cover all our needs.

It is my belief that the old world of public policy is dying and a new world of public policy is being born. The essence of this new world is that the economy of the 1990's cannot support the dreams of the 1960's. Public policy cannot count on historic levels of revenue growth and thus cannot chase geometric curves of public spending. I suggest that this world of ever growing public needs and shrinking resources will require us to reconceptualize much of *what* government does and *how* it does it. It will cause us to define what is absolutely fundamental in many of our basic institutions.

This is not a matter of conservative or liberal. It is not a matter of "won't." It is a matter of "can't." It is not a philosophic difference between parties, but a resource limitation imposed by an economy increasingly under international attack and not growing fast enough to sustain programs already undertaken, let alone new needs. Nor can they be met by reallocating existing resources. This is not another argument against "waste in government." Waste cannot be justified, but it will not yield that much new money. We are going to have to decide what is fundamental and what is superfluous. It is not a matter of the heart. It is a matter of the wallet.

Spending on the elderly is one area where considerable funds could be refocused. The elderly are 12 percent of America and receive 57 percent of all federal entitlements. "Retirees" get 65 percent of all federal entitlements, even though studies show that they have the highest amount of discretionary income. America still thinks of the elderly as poor, but as a class they are doing quite well. A child in America is still seven times more likely to be poor than someone 65.

Ken Dychtwald states that between 500,000 and 600,000 millionaires get a Social Security check every month, and that half the millionaires in the country are over 65. Our society *does* have the option of transferring money now going to the rich elderly to poor kids. It could be done through taxing all Social Security and Medicare benefits or even by means testing Social Security. Social Security and Medicare are tremendous transfer payments from a younger to an older generation. Contrary to public myth, people are not "getting their money back" in these programs. The average person retiring today receives back five times more than he and his employer paid into the system (plus interest). The accrual benefits of Medicare are often 20 to 25 times what a retiree has contributed. This is appropriate for many of the elderly, but questionable for those elderly who have considerable resources. Medicare and Medicaid have averaged 19 percent growth a year since their inceptions, and clearly we cannot continue to fund them at such rates.

Public policy today amends Medicare to give heart transplants to the elderly, but 600,000 American women gave birth last year with either little or no prenatal care. That is not a correct distribution of limited resources. We have the highest life expectancy (80) of any country in the world, but we are 20th in infant mortality. That is not fair. Poverty in America wears diapers, not a hearing aid.

We cannot be indiscriminately generous, and therefore we need to develop a sense of "compassionate austerity" where we honor compassionate goals but, perhaps, change the means whereby we accomplish them. Take transportation of the handicapped. The handicapped advocacy groups push for a "barrier free society" and demand a wheelchair lift on every bus in America. Studies show, however, that government can transport three times as many handicapped by vans for a fraction of what it costs to put a wheelchair lift on every bus. The future will have enough money to meet compassionate ends, but we must be

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tougher on how we meet those ends. It doesn't make sense to put a wheelchair lift on every bus in America when we can meet the needs of the handicapped by a much cheaper alternative. We can't afford to govern by slogan.

America has spent too much in some areas and not enough in others. How much money has gone to build new hospitals or new hospital wings? Experts tell us that there are too many hospital beds in America—the estimates run from 200,000 to 400,000 excess beds. Fifty percent of the hospital beds in my state of Colorado are empty. Our roads are deteriorating, our teachers are underpaid, we have over 500,000 medically indigent—but 50 percent of the hospital beds are empty. The Rand Corporation found—albeit before DRG's—that 25 percent of the people in a hospital bed didn't need to be there. They were there for the convenience of their doctor or insurance policy.

Look at the number of health care dollars spent in the area of death and dying. We spend $50 billion a year on people in the last six months of their lives, while we are not giving pregnant women prenatal care and not vaccinating our children. We are simply not rich enough as a society for each one of us to take $100,000 or $200,000 of our kids' limited resources as we are on our way out the door. We talk about the "right to die" as if we have a right to refuse. My research in this area has discovered the amazing fact that worldwide the death rate is one per person. We must recognize that often the best thing to do in many instances is to do nothing. We must recognize that many of the machines and procedures we have invented don't cure but merely prolong dying. Too often our legal system and medical education force us to use these machines, and "can do" has become "must do," even if it means using resources that could buy far more health elsewhere in the system.

The essence of the dilemma of health care, however, is that we have invented more health care than we as a society can afford. No matter how "efficient" we get, no matter if we adopt the Canadian or the English national health system, we will soon find that infinite medical needs have run into finite resources. Capital is the stored flexibility we have to build a better world for our kids. We only have it once, and if we spend it on redundant wheelchair lifts and empty hospital beds—instead of robots and new factories and new teaching techniques—we cheat our children.

This will require hard choices. In some places they are being made. In 1986, the Oregon Legislature decided to stop funding transplants (except kidneys) and transfer the money, instead, to maternal and child health. They decided that basic health care for many would buy more health for Oregon than high-priced, high technology medicine for a few.

Misuse of our country's energies and resources is rampant in many areas of our society. Look at our legal system. Look at the amount of money spent on a number of colleges and universities that are simply not necessary to meet our educational needs.

We must painfully but inevitably think through the *meaning* and limits of compassion. Do we give a coronary bypass operation to an eighty-five-year-old with dementia? How many heart valves does the public buy for a drug abuser? How much can we afford to subsidize self-abusive behavior? Two-thirds of all the deaths before age 65 are the result of bad habits or self-abuse. We are going to have to find yardsticks to compare hip replacements with senior citizen centers. Do we give chemotherapy to an eighty-five-year-old with metatastic cancer and a 5 percent survival rate? I don't know the answers to these questions, but I do know that they have to be asked.

A just society can no longer be created by merely spending new money. There is some new money, but not much and that is heavily mortgaged. The challenge of this Brave New World of public policy is to reexamine some of our historic assumptions, to reallocate some of our existing resources to meet new needs, and to fund our new inadequacies out of our old excesses.

What is ultimately at stake here is not merely our standard of living, but our entire economic and political system. No nation is great forever. Nations rise and nations fall. Sometimes it is necessary to call on citizens to discipline themselves, to sacrifice, to take less, to stop thinking only of rights and privileges and to start thinking of duties and responsibilities. No nation can forever distribute the spoils of a wealthy continent and past glory. At some point in every nation's history it becomes reality time. That time is now. To do that, we must start to "think in different terms."

Richard Lamm, formerly governor of Colorado, is director of the Center for Public Policy and Contemporary Issues at the University of Denver.

POP CULTURE

Jeanne Berg

Mother Knows Best

by Bruce Frohnen

Man may be dying out, but patriarchy—men's oppression of women—lives on. If only we were more controlled by women, or at least by the feminine aspect of our natures, life would be much better: kinder, gentler, and more "caring." It is patriarchy, after all, that makes America so aggressive; it is patriarchy that makes American women so miserable; it is patriarchy that makes American men so disgustingly (dare I say it?) male.

One of the primary battlegrounds in the war against "patriarchy" is children's literature. As "Feminists on Children's Media" comment in the introduction to a guide to "nonsexist books about girls for young readers" entitled *Little Miss Muffet Fights Back*: "the rigid sex roles depicted in most children's books—active and independent male characters, passive and dependent feminine

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characters—[are] detrimental to the healthy development of young readers of both sexes."

Unspoken, of course, is just what "healthy development" might mean. Perhaps a hint may be gleaned from the frontispiece of this guide. It shows Little Miss Muffet, with curds and whey on her lap, her rosy cheeks and cherubic smile rendered macabre by the spoon raised in her hand, set to smash the hapless spider dangling in front of her.

Such a picture is far different from the traditional one feminists so loathe; the "traditional" picture in which women do "nothing" (this category includes, of course, being a housewife) or are portrayed as evil. The only "independent" female characters in traditional children's literature, according to another guide to "good" books called *Girls Are People Too!*, are the stepmothers and witches of fairy tales—whom patriarchialists have painted as evil for asserting themselves.

The good news is that children choose, in droves, to read books such as C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* series in which they may partake of a great adventure while learning the importance of combating evil through virtuous deeds. The bad news is that the "professionals" who consider it their duty to pass judgment on the tastes of our children are not happy about this situation. And they intend to do something about it. As one librarian informed me, while children prefer books with traditional themes, "we try to direct them to better reading."

The library system of Portland, Oregon (where I live), is doing its best to guide parents toward "healthy" books. Portland's guide is entitled "Role Free: Non-sexist Readings for Children." "Role Free" is a veritable goldmine for the seeker of androgyny. The cover, drawn in that exaggerated style (round faces, huge eyes, and puffy lips) most of us thought died with flower power, pictures four "children," two boys and two girls, one of each in shorts and long pants, all looking like they have just gotten off the bus from Woodstock—their knapsacks slung across their shoulders casually, the boys' hair as long as many girls'. One girl apparently is about to knee one boy in the groin, while the other girl holds his friend at bay, wrestling his arm out of the way. Inside is a listing of "good" books that emphasize nontraditional roles along with a listing of other bibliographies such as *Little Miss Muffet Fights Back* and, of course, *Girls Are People, Too!*

As to the goals of these guides, nothing that I might say could add to the annotation given in *Little Miss Muffet* for a rather clever, if excessively ironic little story entitled *Petronella*: "A smart and plucky princess rescues a prince from an enchanter by passing three dangerous tests with wit and bravery. Unfortunately, the prince is a fool and the princess goes off with the enchanter instead—a wise choice, *though so clever a princess might have questioned marriage itself.*" We should all be that clever. And *Little Miss Muffet* would make our children so by recommending books that, for instance, depict female bullies. After all, kids "might as well know early" that bullying knows no gender. Praise be.

One of the claims made by feminists is that books should "reflect reality"—that is, feminist reality—and in a way that promotes new (feminist-approved) circumstances such as the breakdown of the traditional family, while denigrating the "leftovers" of yesteryear. Judging from books such as *My Mom Travels a Lot*, *The Case of the Scaredy Cats*, *Mitch and Amy*, and *Anastasia Krupnik*, there has been some success in this endeavor. Father "caringly" plays with his daughter while Mother is away on business; young girls oust girl-hating boys from their fort through physical violence because they are insulted by the boys' bigotry in not letting them join their club; a young girl learns from her friend's hippie mother (complete with Volkswagen bus, knapsack, and a filthy house) that there are more important things in life than cleanliness, an ordered family life, and personal responsibility; a ten-year-old girl discusses poetry with her academic father and sexual encounters with her artist mother while planning to name her soon-to-be-born brother something I cannot bring myself to cite in a family journal, but which other ten-year-olds are invited to read and laugh at, along with other less anatomical four-letter words which "children hear all the time." Reality may be something we have to deal with, but do we really want *this* reality reflected in our childrens' books in *these* ways?

It remains true, however, that most books for children do not meet the "stringent standards" set by feminist authorities. And it is somewhat ironic (and, no doubt, a cause of frustration for feminists) that so pedestrian and relatively tame a book as Beverly Cleary's *Mitch and Amy* should be published as a "Yearling Book"—one of a series of books that are chosen by a professor emeritus of children's literature from NYU and "designed especially to entertain and enlighten young people."

Enlighten in what way? Perhaps we can get a clue from the book's advertisement: "Even though they're twins, 9-year-old Mitch and Amy Huff are very different from each other. Amy is in the top reading group, while Mitch is still stumbling along. Yet when it comes to math, Mitch is a whiz. Amy doesn't have to be told to practice her cello; Mitch would rather be outside riding his skateboard. In fact, it often seems that the only thing the twins have in common is a talent for teasing each other . . . and for showing off the things they happen to do best.

"But in the face of a common enemy named Alan Hibber, the twins stop bickering. They stick up for each other. They stick together. And that's when being a twin is really the best."

Now, the things actually described here are not shocking or even unusual. Indeed the book's major flaw is that, other than the episode with the hippie, it is stunningly pedestrian and boring, consisting of a series of unconnected stories about baking cookies, cleaning floors, and bickering. But the book's blurb is clearly intended to give the impression that it will teach children the "wholesome" lessons that talents (math and reading) are unearned and given by chance, that we are "really equal" (perhaps even "twins") regardless of whether or not we apply ourselves (practice), that the point is to stick together since being the same is really being the best.

All this seems silly. But Beverly Cleary sells a lot of books. And some of the most overtly propagandizing, not only androgynous but overtly man-hating nontraditional books for children also sell well. Take, for example, *The Berenstain Bears*, a series of books that have become so popular McDonald's has included Berenstain

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Bear figurines with its special children's meals.

In the interest of "educating" our children, the authors of *The Berenstain Bears: No Girls Allowed* feel that it is their duty to sow the seeds that will overthrow accepted notions of the relationship between men and women. And they do so using pictures and captions overtly denigrating men. Patriarchy, male dominance, and "violence" are to be destroyed, and society revolutionized, by making our children realize that male is bad and female both good and properly in control of society.

The cover of *The Berenstain Bears: No Girls Allowed* shows three boys staring hatefully out of their fortress-like clubhouse, sharp claws extended at their distressed little sister, who is forbidden from entering by the huge sign posted on the side of the house. The title page includes a "scorepad"—where we may find the "score" or the truth—on which is written the question, "Is it so important that he- and she-bears aren't the same when what really matters is how we play the game?" Indeed, it is the failure of the boy-bears to "play fair" that makes them so inhuman, so bestial in the eyes of the authors. The boy-bears are repeatedly shown reveling in the distress of the little she-bear, wicked grins on their faces.

The story itself is a simple one. The little girl bear (known only as "sister bear"—perhaps names would allow for too much individuality) begins the story as a poor runner and marble player. Soon, however, she learns how to play these and other games and proceeds to defeat her "brother bears" at all of them. In this way the female is shown to be capable of greater prowess than the male. The lesson is, of course, that once women overcome the handicaps imposed on them by Western society's history of male oppression—the traditional refusal to allow the female to compete—the female is superior to the male, even at his own games. This is why males oppress females in the first place.

Not surprisingly, the brother bears react to their sister's superiority by becoming jealous and hateful. The males attempt to deal with the fact that the female is better than they are by excluding her from their social group. The boy bears build a clubhouse, erecting a sign saying "no girls allowed," and closing the door in their little sister's face.

At this point the parents become significant actors in the story. A seemingly typical working-class couple, the father wears coveralls and the mother a large print dress and matching bonnet. But in fact the parents are much more "enlightened" than their attire might suggest. The mother bear, foreseeing the problems that will arise from her daughter's superiority, points out to her less intelligent husband that males are jealous of female prowess.

When sister bear complains to the parents that she has been excluded from social interaction with her brothers, Papa bear gives the best response that one can expect from a male. "'You're absolutely right!' roared Papa. 'It *isn't* fair! Come, we're going back there and *make* them take you into their silly club—and if they don't, I'm going to tear that clubhouse limb from limb!'"

As a male, Papa bear is obviously incapable of responding to injustice with anything other than force (though his recognition of it makes him a better-than-your-average bear). Luckily, however, Mama bear placates the male with her superior wisdom and character. Recognizing that males are ruled by their appetites, Mama bear suggests that her proletarian husband build a new clubhouse for girls (since males are only good for manual labor in any case). Mama bear then prepares a celebration of the new clubhouse that includes a meal of "barbecued honeycomb and salmon"—no red meat, of course.

Smelling the aroma of the food, the male bears come running and, after the more cooperative female bears take a vote, are allowed to share in the meal. Having been shown the error of their ways in the only way that males can be expected to understand, through an appeal to their stomachs, the boy bears bring the book to a happy conclusion by welcoming the girl bears to the boys' clubhouse and changing their sign to read "Girls Welcome!"

Thus there is a happy ending to the book. Cooperation defeats exclusivity. Sharing defeats independence. The superior females prompt the acquiescence of the inferior males through an appeal to their base ruling appetites.

The lessons that children are supposed to learn from this are painfully obvious, even to an inferior male like me. Since the female is superior to the male in terms of talent, intellect, and morals, the child must attempt to emulate the female in all possible ways. Sharing is to be valued over independence, and competition and personal responsibility are to be dirty words. All attempts to base society on anything other than balanced social groups and the matriarchal "sharing" of all tasks are male and therefore bad. Independence is bad; freedom is bad; America is bad; male is bad.

Bruce Frohnen teaches political science at Reed University in Portland, Oregon.

ART

Jeanne Berg

The End of Art

by Geoffrey Wagner

Reflections on the 1989 Whitney Biennial of American Art

◆

"Among the Neo-Minimalists Liz Larner makes a strangely regular tapestry out of human eyelashes. The team of Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler compares bottles of powdered pigment. Meg Webster makes a big low-lying circle out of nothing but dirt; a second sculpture populates soil with plants, stones, and running water.

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There's a feeling in this work—some of which is quite affecting—that you can go home again, and that home is the early 1970's."

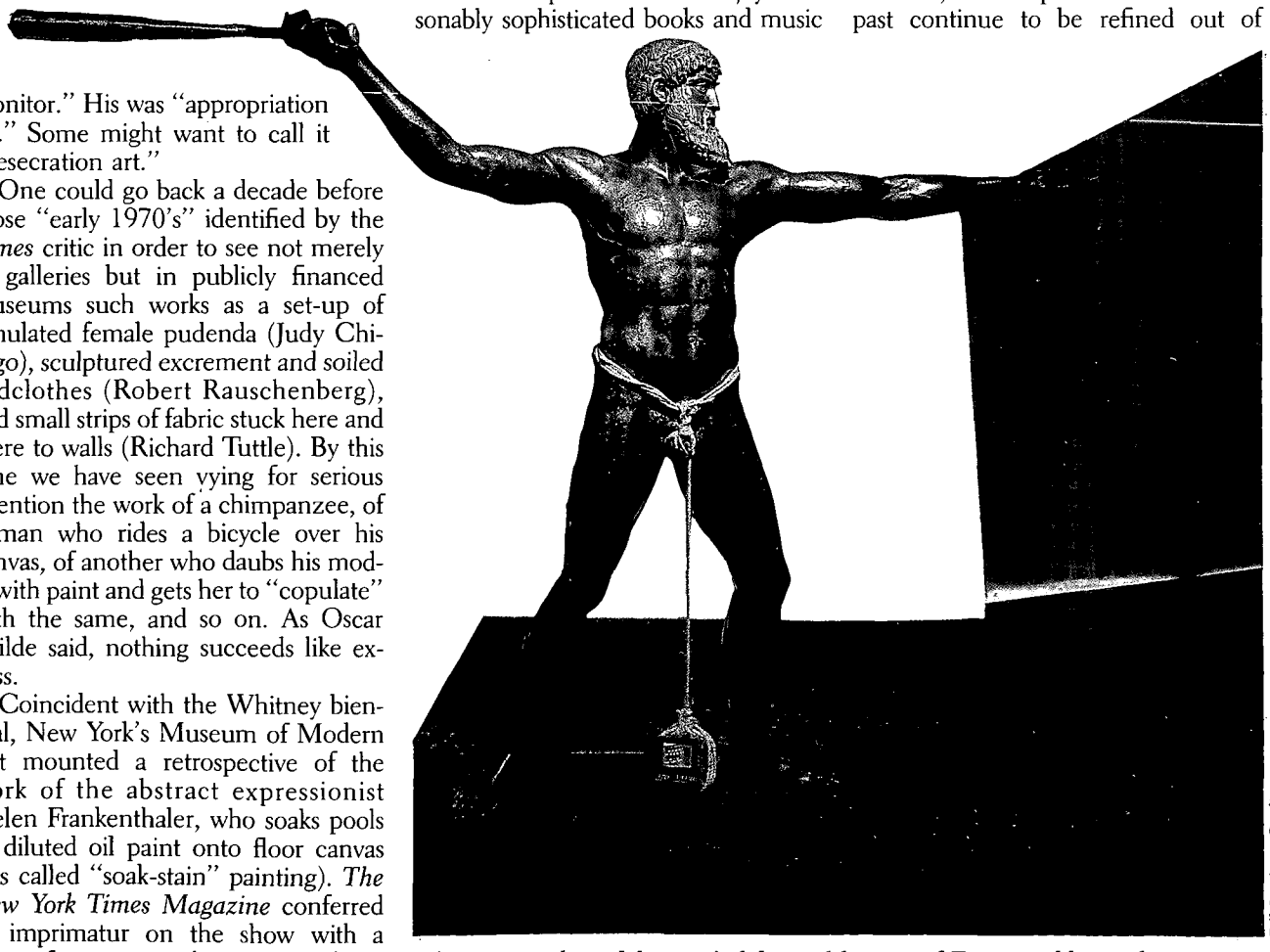
Thus *The New York Times* on the 1989 Whitney Museum of American Art's biennial. Another entrant to this show looked like a hank of hair hanging from the wall, though it might have been some escaped asbestos stuffing. Even the Metropolitan Museum became indignant when a life-sized bronze of Zeus which they owned, and had lent, appeared adorned by a Hispanic artist with a TV monitor around the loins, a baseball bat in the right hand, and in his left a plexiglass screen showing images of the homeless washing windshields, while the television screened scenes of Wall Street. Francisco Torres, the artist in question, answered that "his" Zeus was "hindered by the money and Wall Street materialism that is represented on the monitor." His was "appropriation art." Some might want to call it "desecration art."

One could go back a decade before those "early 1970's" identified by the *Times* critic in order to see not merely in galleries but in publicly financed museums such works as a set-up of simulated female pudenda (Judy Chicago), sculptured excrement and soiled bedclothes (Robert Rauschenberg), and small strips of fabric stuck here and there to walls (Richard Tuttle). By this time we have seen vying for serious attention the work of a chimpanzee, of a man who rides a bicycle over his canvas, of another who daubs his model with paint and gets her to "copulate" with the same, and so on. As Oscar Wilde said, nothing succeeds like excess.

Coincident with the Whitney biennial, New York's Museum of Modern Art mounted a retrospective of the work of the abstract expressionist Helen Frankenthaler, who soaks pools of diluted oil paint onto floor canvas (it's called "soak-stain" painting). *The New York Times Magazine* conferred its imprimatur on the show with a cover feature on the artist. There comes a somewhat ineffable moment in the *Times'* paean of praise to Frankenthaler when two celebrated space-cadet ("color-field") abstractionists, Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis, make "a now-historic pilgrimage" to Frankenthaler's studio, of which the influential critic Clement Greenberg had the key. Once let in, they felt "exhilarated" by "the idea of being able to spread color out along the surface of the picture without having it create an illusion." What triumph! Centuries of craft destroyed at a blow—or splash. The *Times* critic then concludes that "Frankenthaler is a lot like Paolo Veronese."

O tempora, O mores! We are repeatedly informed that de Kooning could draw like Ingres. No evidence of such has appeared. Moreover, the artist who can "draw like Ingres" seldom entirely abandons the human referent. Picasso never did. But the puffery proceeds amain because you can say anything about nothing: because a middle-class public that still enjoys reasonably sophisticated books and music is bored stiff by wholesale abstraction, and, finally, because curators and collectors want to up the value of works they have either been given or cheaply acquired.

The failure of the Sculls to sell their "modernist" junk put the chill into such impresarios. Since then the pressure has increased to see art as a marketable commodity, investment-worthy. An average Frankenthaler sells today for $120,000, a Pollock in the millions, assuming you can get it home before it disintegrates, for Pollock splashed on house-painter's paint in such heavy impasto that restorers with glue guns are already at work on his MOMA masterpieces, in a way none has to be in the Uffizi in Florence, or the Accademia in Venice. The Rothko scandal, shown up by the painter's daughter, exposed some, though not all, of the grubbier aspects of contemporary art trading. It matters more, however, that the pictorial values of the past continue to be refined out of



Bill Jacobson Studio

The Metropolitan Museum's life-sized bronze of Zeus, wielding a bat at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art. Reproduced by permission of the Whitney Museum.

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existence in movement after movement. Take something like Minimalism which, in one gallery exhibition, offered no more on the walls but brief instructions on what might be there. In Minimalism no skills are needed.

So what are the values of that very small group of pundits who confer status on empty exhibitions, puff up prices of painters in their own collections, and send them overseas to represent American art? For when there is virtually nothing in a painting (as in Ad Reinhardt's black canvases, which have to be trickily lit when photographed to assure that nothing shows), then criteria collapse and the museum curator can merely prophecy, assuring us from his eminence that the work is avant-garde and original. He occupies the throne.

The entire gnosis of modern art in this country reposes on *originality*. Professor Lester Longman calls it "the paramount value" today. T.E. Hulme told us that works of art aren't eggs; he could have made his point more trenchantly by substituting automobiles for eggs. The whole structure of our economy, as of our necessary military security, rests on the new. Its infection in the sphere of art can be seen in *The New York Times*' review of the biennial, where the critic chops up art developments into decades, assuming there is a new art available to the 80's that was not present in the 70's.

But art is not technology, and art modes that have unseated their antecedents come in turn to seem trite, commonplace (cubism, futurism, dada). When I first came to New York, the Guggenheim Museum was filled with the hard-edged abstractions of Hilla Rebay and her followers and friends; with the advent of the abstract expressionists (and James Johnson Sweeney to the curatorship) these were banished to the basement where, so far as I know, they still remain, though similar paintings have erupted and the ranks of their successors, despite astronomical prices paid for publicized figures, have been thinned drastically and may well end up in those self-same cellars.

But no museum director is going to chart a decline in this year's model of contemporary art. To be extreme today is to be original. To be extravagantly extreme is to be more so. No museum director today adds much representational art to his contemporary collection (unless it is accredited as investment-worthy); that model has been seen before. "Imitation should not be permitted to have even the slightest part in the creative process," wrote the influential Hans Hoffman in the catalog of the 1959 University of Illinois Annual. Yet originality in itself was far from a preeminent canon in the past (El Greco and Turner only being valued for originality years after their deaths). And what about all those Madonnas? As Longman suggests, we have turned originality in art into innovation, the new. Signature art (a readily recognizable style to identify the painter) is paramount, yet carries its dangers for the practitioner. After all, when you have established your trademark, be you Pollock, Mondrian, or Kline, you would be ill advised to alter it in the marketplace; at a recent Christie's auction black-and-white Klines (his true signature) went for higher prices than Klines with color. But after the trademark, what? Why persist in a style that has been, *pace* the pundits, superceded? Why not take art to the logical vacuum it now inhabits and discover "that remorseless consolation — in the end is the beginning," as a MOMA catalog described a Pollock?

The critics have succeeded in making representation look like political reaction, thereby licensing a new order that emancipates the artist from any traditional accomplishments of his mystery, subserving the same to money. There seems every evidence we shall continue to see the end of art served up in our museums as kitsch (witness the tragedy of England's Victoria and Albert) and funded by tax-levying grants — take the arid boxes of Donald Judd, the Tilted Arc placed in Manhattan Plaza by Richard Serra (removed at public request), the "earthworks" of an artist who collected dreck from beside the New Jersey turnpike (and has now returned it), the shabby sacks dropped in the Caribbean by another, the encasing of large stretches of the landscape in plastic by Christo (inducted into the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1989).

Perhaps the final insult has been to authenticate this misdirection of art by citing someone like Baudelaire as its sponsor. Baudelaire left us a body of art criticism in the form of descriptive reviews of Parisian "salons," not entirely dissimilar from Whitney biennials. Delacroix allowed Baudelaire to be around. The poet knew Manet and stayed with Courbet, in whose vast *l'Atelier*, rejected by the 1855 Salon, Baudelaire may be seen (just).

Yet none of these artists abandoned the humanistic. It is simply difficult to see today as Baudelaire saw. It is hard to see an early Constable as revolutionary ("Take away that nasty green thing," they told him at the Royal Academy) any more than it is that famous bridge at Arles. Baudelaire's father was a close friend of Jean Naigeon, a pupil of David and curator of the Luxembourg from 1802 to 1830. Baudelaire saw his first Delacroix (the *Bataille de Taillebourg*) in the 1837 Salon, thus beginning a lifelong infatuation with that ultra-romantic artist. He attended Delacroix's funeral with Manet.

It is true he championed originality, but he would have been the last to say, with Herbert Read in *Icon and Idea*, that "Feeling and thinking are one." Baudelaire's goddess of beauty was a stern figure, his sonnet to her including the line *"Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes."* He invariably demanded discipline in his own poetry and in fact admired much painting that today looks to us like the acme of vulgarity — Lassales-Bordes' dying Cleopatra, Baudry's *Vestal*, Prud'hon's *Venus et Adonis*, and Haussoullier's *Fontaine de jouvence*, a pastiche even in its title. As Baudelaire put it, "Look at what it is to live in a time when people think inspiration suffices for and replaces everything . . . there lies the abyss into which plunges the chaotic course of Mazeppa." Our standards in art, as exemplified in museum show after show, are those of hype, and hype is kitsch. Consider Gordon Washburn, prefacing a Carnegie International at Pittsburgh: "To be out of step with your contemporaries is to be camouflaged. Although clearly visible, no one may chance to 'see' you." Or, as Oscar Wilde again put it, to be intelligible these days is to be found out.

Geoffrey Wagner's new book is a biography of Baudelaire entitled The Wings of Madness.

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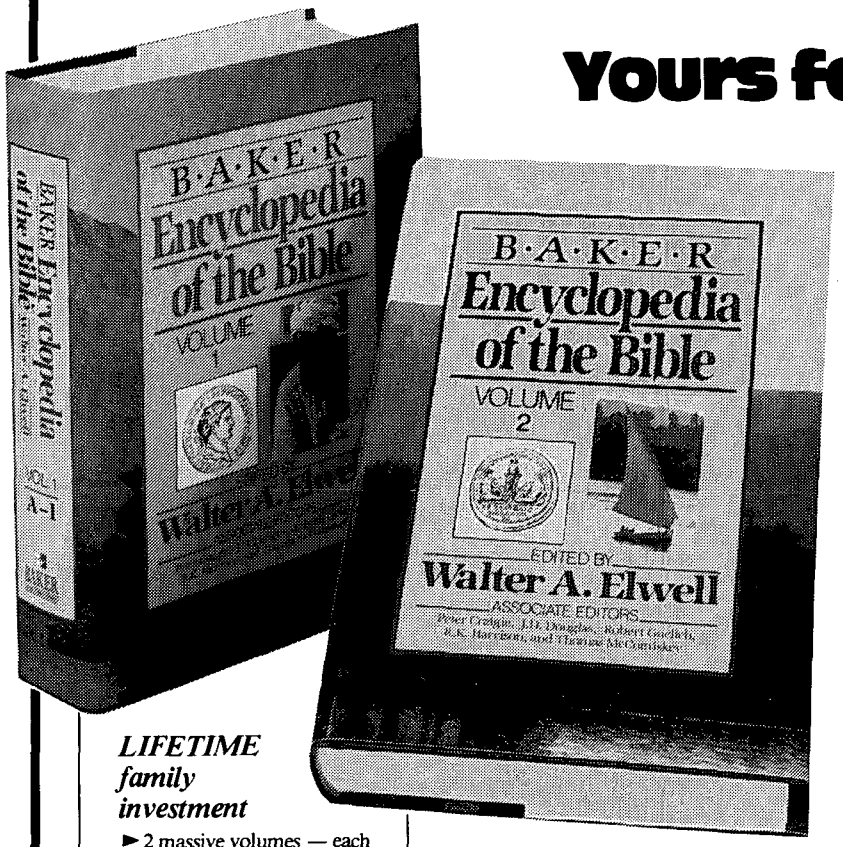

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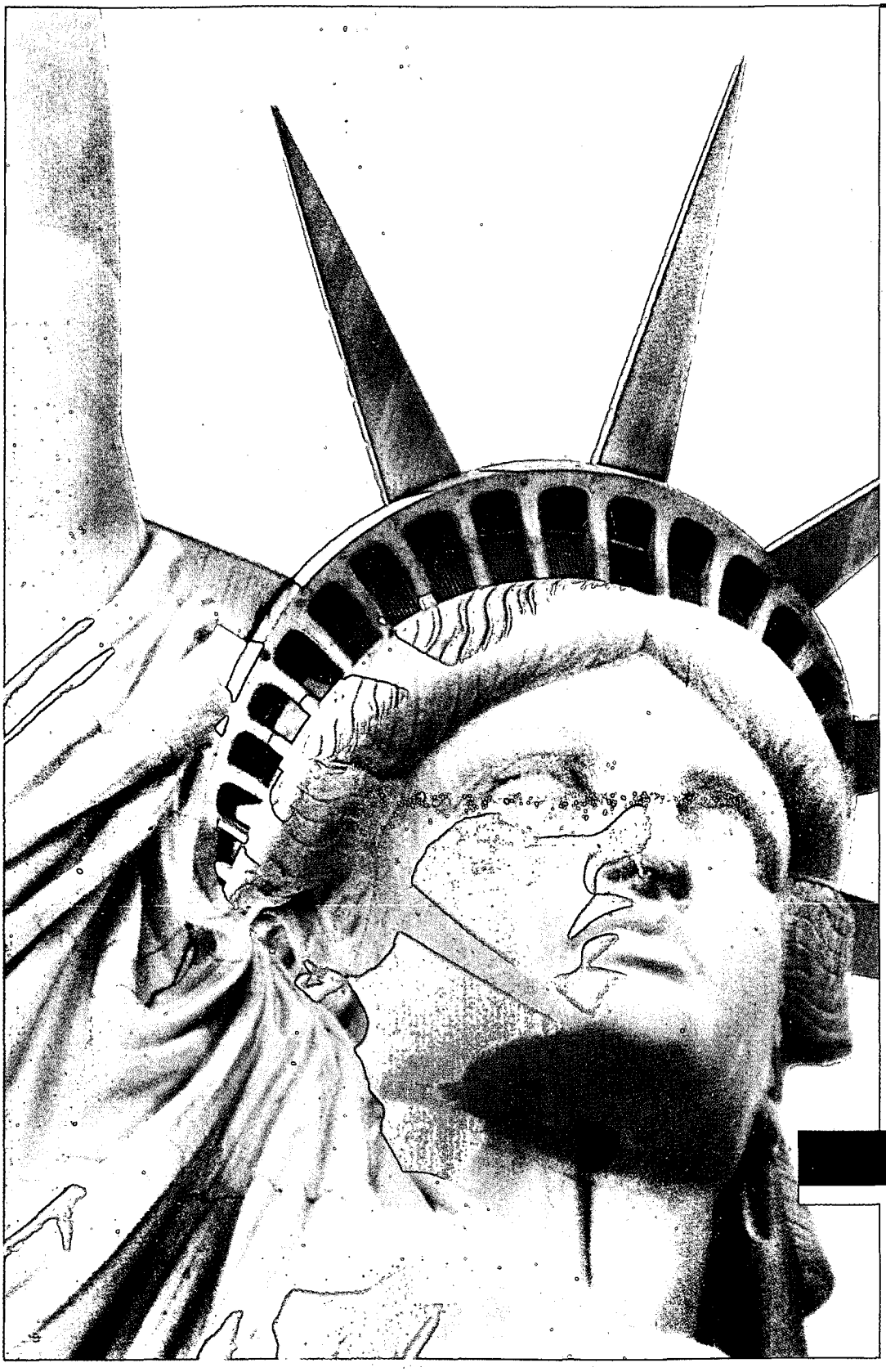

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